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REALMS OF FANTASY

ABOVE: The unchallenged masters of fantastic art grace our pages this issue. Visit our Gallery on page 66.
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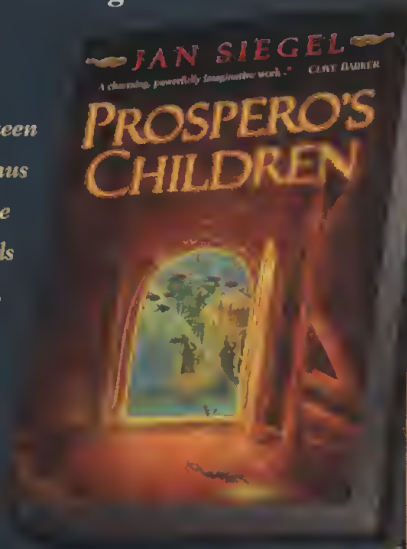
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I'M PLEASED TO PRESENT ANOTHER RUNner-up in our You Too Can Write An Editorial contest. Suzanne Weiner is a young woman with some very good ideas that should strike a chord with those of you still in middle or high school. If you are one of those unlucky few, perhaps you can show this Editorial to your English teachers and keep your fingers crossed. *Realms of Fantasy*: The Magazine That Changed the Course of American Education!

A Fantastic Solution to Illiteracy

Ah, the good old days of high school. Proms, friends, driving lessons, English class ... OK, maybe English class isn't one of the fondest memories of those readers lucky enough to have already escaped their bondage. (Read: "graduated from high school.") Even for avid readers and writers, high school English can be the stuff of nightmares. What better way to completely turn kids off reading than an endless train of Dickens, Hawthorne, and Melville? Even with the occasional respite granted by Orwell, Bradbury, or Shakespeare, those "classics" are often seemingly interminable.

Is it ironic that a future English major would dread going to her English class every morning? Yes, I suppose it is. However, I am not alone. My 12-year-old brother, who just entered the seventh grade, has been complaining for years that the books he was reading in elementary school were not only terminally dull, but beneath his reading level—a sad necessity, as he claims that nearly half of the students in his classes are practically illiterate. It is truly depressing to see a 12-year-old so embittered.

Perhaps the root of many of the illiteracy problems—as well as some of the dread associated with English class—is the reading material. Children are impressionable. We are not making the right impression. What we need to do is introduce young children to books with plots that can grab and hold their fickle attentions. Something with fascinating characters and high-quality writing. Something, perhaps, like a Fantasy novel. There are dozens upon dozens of Fantasy novels and stories out there that would be suitable. Patricia C. Wrede's series, *The Enchanted Forest Chronicles*, would probably be ideal for a fourth-grade class, for example. (I only mention that series specifically because my brother has recently become addicted to it. His only regret, to my knowledge, is that he hadn't discovered it years earlier.) I firmly believe that if elementary school students are given a book that they like just once or twice, there is a much higher chance that they will become active readers for the rest of their lives. Not only that, but it will boost their vocabulary a considerable amount. My 10th-grade English teacher used to make us write down any sentences we found containing one of the words on our vocabulary lists. I found about 90 percent of my vocabulary words in Fantasy novels.

The only English class that I remember with a great degree of fondness is my seventh-grade class, taught by Mr. Sherry. Mr. Sherry may not have given us any Fantasy novels to read, but what he did give us was an equally enjoyable, if somewhat eclectic, collection. His tastes are rather diverse and he is a great fan of O. Henry, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and ... Rod Serling. My class was moved and entertained by O. Henry's ironic plot twists. Our minds were boggled by the brilliant deductions of Sherlock Holmes. Most unusual, and best of all, was when we had the chance to discuss the literary merit of the screenplays of *Twilight Zone* episodes. We would debate everything from quality of the dialogue to appropriateness of the setting, much as I later came to discuss Shakespearean plays in high school. I probably owe Mr. Sherry a thank you, or at least a visit before I go off to college to pursue the dream that he may have subconsciously instilled in me.

Make of this what you will. Maybe it is a persuasive essay to begin a crusade for the sake of future students. Maybe it is a cry for mercy aimed at any high school English teachers who happen to be reading it. Maybe it is simply the incessant whining of a not-quite-17-year-old girl who, at nearly three o'clock in the morning, is bored and thoroughly sick of her summer reading projects. Whatever it is, one thing is undeniable. Adult illiteracy rates are appalling and children all across the United States are failing reading tests miserably. Something has to be done. If that something can't begin at home, it must begin at school. Who knows? Perchance even one good book in elementary school can lessen the irreparable damage inflicted later by a great white whale or a little orphan named Pip. ❧

Suzanne Weiner

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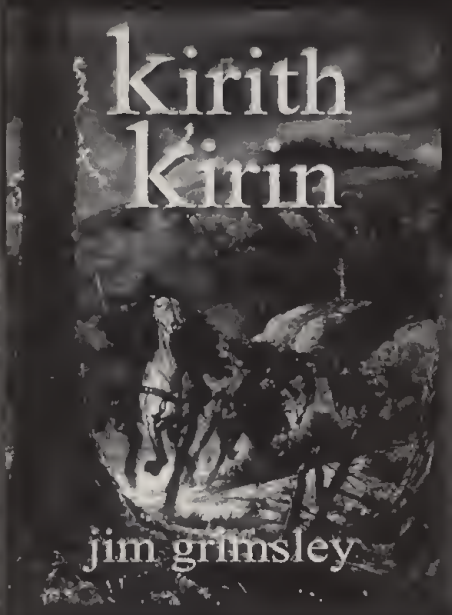
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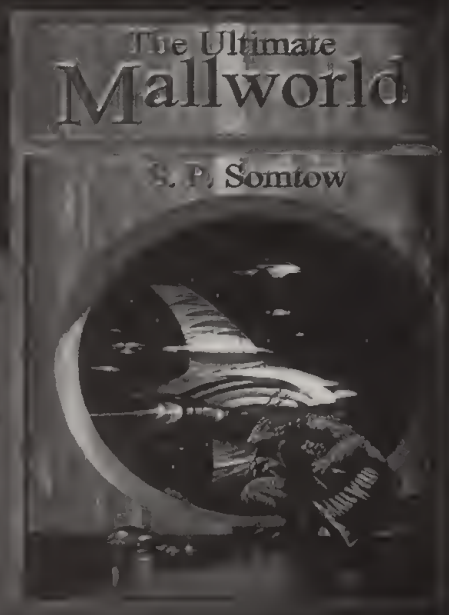
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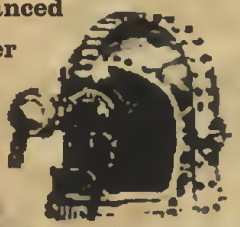
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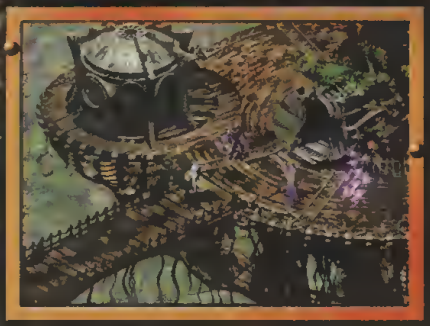
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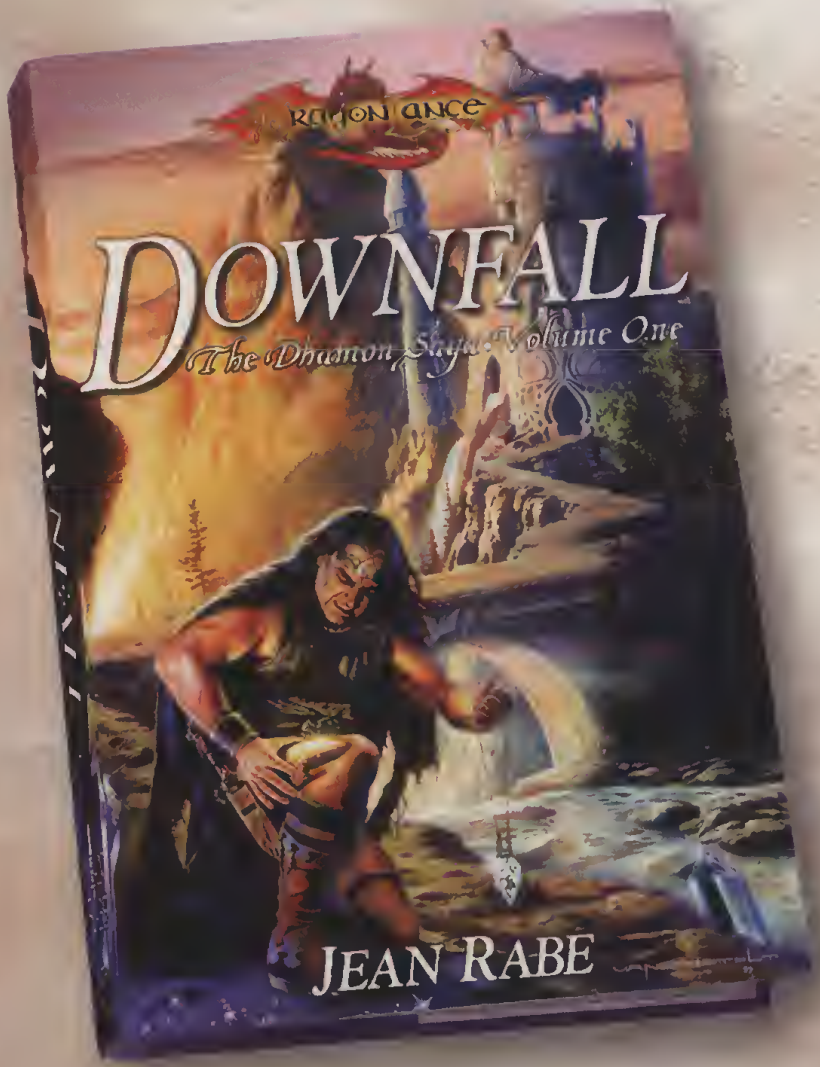
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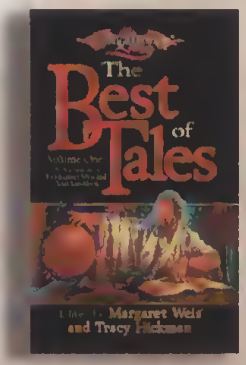


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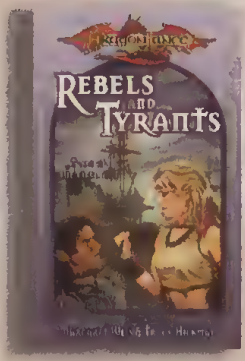
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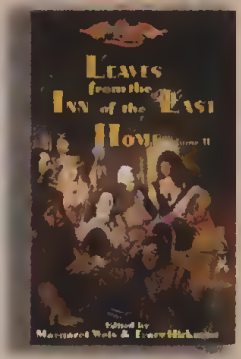
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Wizards of the Coast

BY RESA NELSON

Dinosaur. (For all we know, they really could talk.)

SOMETHING WONDERFUL HAS HAPPENED. AND MAYBE—JUST MAYBE—IT MAY NOT ONLY change the future of Fantasy films, but possibly encourage Hollywood to embrace them in a way we've never seen before.

In 1977, *Star Wars* changed the fate of Science Fiction in movies and television. Up until that time, special effects in Science Fiction films lacked believability at best, and were hopelessly cheesy at worst. The result was that most people simply weren't interested in seeing Science Fiction on the large or small screen—until the remarkable special effects in *Star Wars* caused a buzz that quickly had audiences lining up around city blocks to see it.

Fantasy films have suffered a similar fate. The types of fantasies that take place in magical worlds or a romanticized past usually don't translate well to film. The special effects don't have what it takes to transport audiences into a world that looks so believable that it could really exist. Until now.

Imagine this: What if you could travel back to prehistoric times? What if you landed at the time when scientists theorize that a meteor struck Earth and caused the extinction of the dinosaurs? What if you took a film crew with you and filmed it as it happened?

Welcome to Walt Disney Picture's *Dinosaur* (scheduled for a May 19 release), in which photographically realistic dinosaurs inhabit live-action backgrounds that were filmed all over the planet.



In Disney's latest effort, photo-realistic dinosaurs may lead the way to more Fantasy films.



"It's a new kind of animation," says producer Pam Marsden. "It's almost its own genre, because it's live-action animation. We've really worked hard to make our characters as realistic as possible ... we wanted to use live-action background plates, and they would not have blended in well if they were cartooned in any way."

Film crews shot the backgrounds in locations ranging from California deserts and an arboretum outside of Los Angeles to Venezuela, Samoa, Hawaii, Jordan, and Australia.

The movie tells the story of a dinosaur named Aladar, who is raised from the egg by a clan of prehistoric mammals—lemurs, monkey-like animals that still live today. Aladar lives on an island with his adoptive family, isolated from other dinosaurs. When Aladar and the lemurs survive the meteor strike, they leave the island and head for the mainland, where he encounters other dinosaurs for the first time.

"The story really revolves around [Aladar]," says director Ralph Zondag, "and the values that are instilled in him by the lemurs—those of compassion, looking out for one another, being more of a family unit. And when he's introduced to his true dinosaur brothers, he quickly realizes that the dinosaurs are a very cold-hearted group.

"He then finds a herd of dinosaurs that are trekking to a nesting ground in hope that there's some sort of life up there after the aftermath of the fireball—the meteor that struck. And, of course, there's a conflict between Aladar and the leader of that herd, because of two completely opposing philosophies."

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Aladar and other dinosaurs go looking for signs of life after the meteor hits Earth.

One of the challenges facing the filmmakers was how to tell a story whose characters are dinosaurs. The solution was to have the dinosaurs talk, in the same way that the animals talk in the movie *Babe*.

"It's one thing to see a pig in a movie," Marsden says. "And I love *Babe* ... but here you get to see a dinosaur in a movie, and they are so terrifically realized that you end up kind of being awestruck by how realistic they are, just as you were with *Babe* when you saw them first talk.

"We try very hard to be realistic, but on the other hand, it's a movie. [The dinosaurs'] eyes don't bulge out of their heads, like in a cartoon. They don't sing. We've been pretty careful trying to define parameters that don't push us out of a realistic mode."

Director Eric Leighton (*The Nightmare Before Christmas*) adds, "[The fact that the dinosaurs talk is] our nod to Fantasy."

The filmmakers considered combining CGI (computer-graphics imaging) with miniatures. But the look wasn't real enough. So they made the decision to jump into unknown territory. They decided to shoot the live-action backgrounds and figure out how to marry the computer-generated dinosaurs to the live backgrounds in such a way that the dinosaurs would look real.

But how do you create a dinosaur that looks real?

"We used a lot of reference materials that are around today," Marsden says. "We looked at feathers, we looked at lizard skins. We looked at elephants to watch the weight shift. We used pelts to try and figure out how [the lemurs'] fur would work."

Research included field trips to the zoo and specialty ranches to see exotic animals and study how they move. Leighton learned from a paleontologist friend about an animal called a pangolin that's alive today and native to east Africa. "It was one of the few animals in the world that was able to be mobile quite easily both quadrupedally and bipedally, which is a hard thing to find. And when it went bipedally, it actually used its long tail as a counterbalance, which was exactly the theory that the paleontologist had for our primary dinosaur, an iguanodon."

To get an even better handle on how dinosaurs moved, Leighton journeyed to a museum in Montana, where he and paleontologist Jack Horner reconstructed hundred-million-year-old dinosaur bones. "Based on the muscle scarring on the bones, [we] figured out where the muscles were attached and approximated ranges of movement ...



we did that bone by bone, and brought all that information back to our modelers."

Sean Phillips, model development supervisor, describes the fine details of using computers to make muscle movement look real. "We thought we would bend skin initially with the bones. And then we were going to also have the musculature underneath this, and then we were going to shrink-wrap the skin onto the muscle. To do that, you needed a very accurate, anatomically correct full set of muscles that really were ultimately going to give the character its entire shape."

However, the results weren't good. The skin didn't look right. "What we ended up with eventually was a little bit more simplified system where the skin was actually moved by the muscles themselves. So we built the skin first, and then we built the animation controls inside of that, in sort of a static, neutral pose. And then the musculature was fit in between the bones and skin. And then to move it, all of the muscles were divided into little tiny pieces called polygons. Each point of skin attached to the nearest polygon in the musculature. So whatever it was closest to, it kind of stuck to."

Supervising animator Mike Belzer describes how they fit the computer-generated dinosaurs into the filmed live-action background. "We would try to have the background plate to work with, and that would go through basically a pipeline of different bus stops, as it were, of where the shot ends up and starts off with live-action plates. There's areas like image planning where they basically take the information and also construct a faux or a ground plane for us to play with, because we need something physically in space in the computer to walk these dinosaurs on. So it would be somebody's job to take the topography of the ground. If there's a boulder, to actually enhance it and put some type of computer representation of a boulder there, so if we're walking the characters, they have to move around this thing ... or if they step on it, it's a physical thing that they actually have to step upon. So it would be looking at the live-action plate, but at the same time we're working within our own computer environment."

In order to recreate how Earth might have looked to the dinosaurs, the live-action backgrounds themselves were digitally enhanced. "[We] try to get it as real as we can [but] enhance the color with the aid of the computer to help give a better sense of a time and place," Zondag says. "We want to try to have a look that would sort of feel like it took place 75 million years ago—a richer color palette. So it gave everything a virginal quality. A very untouched feel."

Making sure that the dinosaurs fit in seamlessly with the backgrounds involved other departments responsible for lighting, shading, compositing, and scene and character finalling—fixing mistakes and making sure everything looked perfect.

For example, making the fur of the lemurs look real. "Any time that their fur is contacting something ... like, if a character was touching the fur on his arm, we had to push the fur out of the way," Phillips says. "Also, adding things like wind in the fur ... which I think looks pretty amazing. The wind through the fur is something we're pretty proud of."

One obvious question is how does *Dinosaur* differ from *Jurassic Park*? What is it that really sets the two films apart?

In *Jurassic Park*, the dinosaurs actually have very little screen time. Although the running time of *Jurassic Park* is two hours seven minutes, the actual screen time of the dinosaurs is about 12 minutes—and the CG-


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dinosaurs (as opposed to the puppet-like baby velociraptor that hatches from an egg, or the animatronic-like ailing triceraptops) account for about half of those appearances.

By comparison, *Dinosaur* is nothing but CG-dinosaurs from beginning to end. Some scenes show herds of thousands of dinosaurs on screen at once. As Phillips says, "You're going to see a lot of dinosaurs."

Also, *Jurassic Park* is essentially a Horror movie. The humans are the heroes, and the dinosaurs are the scary monsters. In *Dinosaur*, there are no humans, so the dinosaurs are the heroes. Instead of a Horror movie, *Dinosaur* is more like an epic historical Fantasy.

"*Jurassic Park* was a good example of an effects movie," Leighton says. "It took years of work. A large crew put working lots of overtime into it, lots of blood put into that film for 60 effects scenes. And our film is all effects scenes. There's somewhere between 1,300 and 1,400 effects scenes. It's a much, much larger scale."

Belzer explains further differences between *Jurassic Park* and *Dinosaur*. "Not to criticize what they did—because it really was monumental. But a lot of what they had shot were shots in the dark, in the rain, and it's very moody and it's very dramatic. But what they also were able to get away with was some mistakes that you can hide in the shadows. We are, [in *Dinosaurs*], for the majority of the time, right out in daylight. And if there's a mistake, you're gonna see it.

"So you have something that's fresh-looking. There's a number of shots, I think, in (the *Jurassic Park* sequel, *The Lost World*) where they did go in the daylight, and they did a nice job with it. But it takes monumental effort to make it look that much better, because you're seeing everything."

In most movies, special effects are not even addressed until the movie is almost complete. As a result, the special-effects work doesn't even begin until shortly before the movie is released. "Usually, in the special-effects business, you're the last thing that gets dropped in right before it goes to the theaters," Phillips says. "So, at most, in the past, I've had to wait three weeks before the thing immediately went into the theater. Where, I think, I finished up on [*Dinosaur*] in late October. So by the time it ends up in theaters, six months will have passed."

In other words, instead of being treated as almost an afterthought, special effects is the entire focus of *Dinosaur*.

So how did they accomplish some of the special effects of merging the dinosaurs with the live action?

"There's a raptor-like character who steals the egg [from which the main character, Aladar, eventually hatches] and runs through the forest," Zondag says. "You see him step into the water with one foot, and we back out of it. That water was all done right there on location by literally throwing a rock into the water, and then digitally erasing it, and then laying over the character to hit exactly at that same place after it was shot.

"Or a character just running across a log, and you have the log kind of wiggling just a little bit in the wake of his footsteps. Again, it was just a guy, just out of frame, putting his weight onto the log and wiggling it. Some of the effects are as simple as can be.

"And some of them, they're a bit more detailed. There would be a little bit of model work involved. There's a character, Baylene, our big brachiosaur, who steps into this dirt pool and then water starts to rush up around her foot. That was a very difficult thing to do. We had to have an actual structure that was exactly the same shape as her foot. I think it was one-quarter scale. And so they went and shot that, and then they actually had the real water lay in over the toes of the sculpted foot. And then, once that was done, we had the generated foot—the CGI—lay over the top of that structure. And that way, the water could roll right up the digital information."

The making of *Dinosaur* was such a massive undertaking that it required the creation of a new facility to develop the technology used in the film. About six hundred people worked on making *Dinosaur*, and many of them invested between two-and-a-half to more than five years of their lives working on this project.

"We call it the high school of movies," Belzer says, "because people have worked four years on this movie. You should get a diploma."



One of the biggest challenges of making *Dinosaur* was finding the people who would make the movie. When it comes to traditional animation, it's a no-brainer—you just hire the animators who are proven commodities. But because the technology that was required to make *Dinosaur* was new and being developed, there were no proven commodities. Thus began a worldwide search to recruit people not only from different backgrounds but from different countries.

"We are quite a melting pot," Leighton says. "We searched all over the world. We went to England. We went to Canada. We went to Ireland, Japan ... and collected people. Some from computer-graphics backgrounds. Some from traditional drawing backgrounds ... from stop-motion or puppet backgrounds, and trained them on the computer."

Once brought to the United States, they worked in a group environment. "We'd do tests, and we'd have everybody gathered together in the same theater and have discussions about it." And in that way, worldwide talent was pooled to contribute to the development of this new technology.

"It would be impossible for me to be more happy with the way the movie has turned out," Marsden says. "Its look is phenomenal. It's a great-looking movie, and it's a huge thing that I think we've achieved."

The new computer-animation facility that was created to make *Dinosaur* is now poised to make more movies.



The number of dinosaurs shot in daylight caused a monumental effort to be spent on special effects.

Could this be the perfect technology to bring Fantasy to life? Will this open the door to Fantasy in a way that has never been done before? Will Hollywood see the possibilities? What if Fantasy movies become as popular and widespread as Science Fiction movies have become?

"I really believe the films of the future are going to use so much more of this, and the technology, of course, is just getting better," Zondag says.

"There are so many different projects out there that have been side-lined purely because nobody knew how to do it. And I think what's happening now is that this is opening a door—once this film comes out, it will sort of tell all the studios out there that, yes, there's plenty of these stories that can be made with lots of digital characters. It's going to open the door for storytelling in a really big way."

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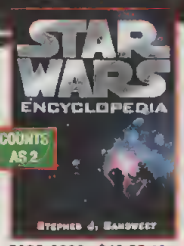


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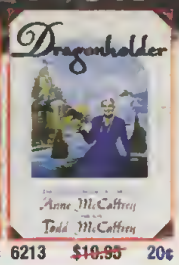
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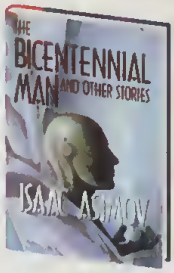


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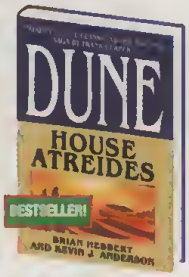


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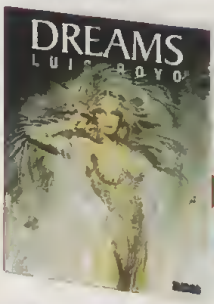
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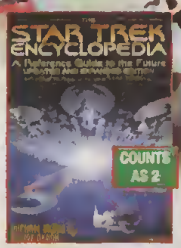
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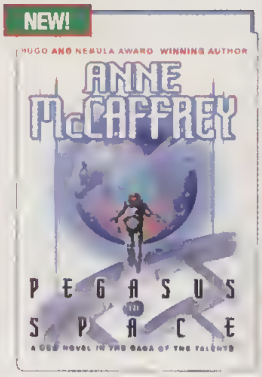


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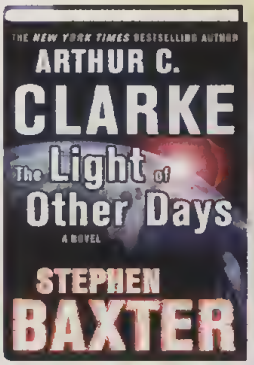
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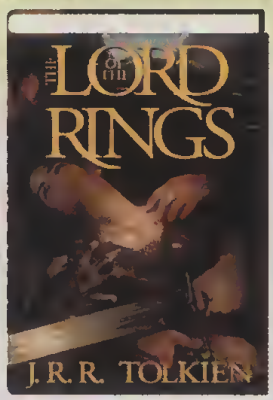
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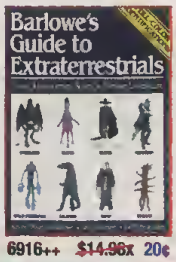
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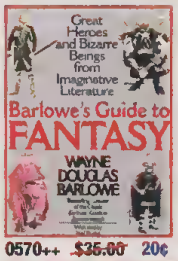
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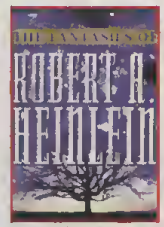
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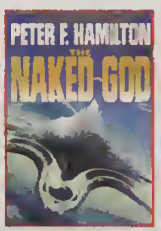
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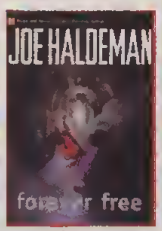
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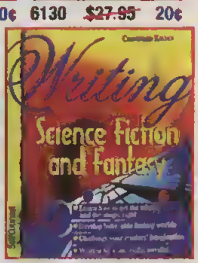
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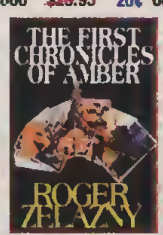
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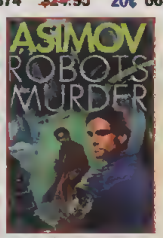
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THE Science Fiction BOOK CLUB

BY GAHAN WILSON

From Yorkshire to Cimmeria and back again.

THE BACK-PAGE BLURB ON MY COPY OF *PROSPERO'S CHILDREN*, (DEL REY BOOKS, NY; 368 pp.; hardcover; $24.00), the first book in a trilogy by Jan Siegel, is oddly illogical in that it starts out by informing us that the book inside is very much "in the tradition of Phillip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*" and wraps up by announcing that it is "like nothing you have read before."

On the other hand, in the tradition of a sage's comment that "nothing is as it appears; nor is it in any way different," there is truth in both these conflicting statements: It is quite likely that the book may have been heavily inspired by Pullman's work, but that does not stop it from being highly original. Poe did indeed create the mystery short story, but Sherlock Holmes is not a rip-off.

The main aspect of Siegel's book that forms a vast, gaping chasm separating the two authors' works, and I think connects *Prospero's Children* more closely to their shared paternity of C.S. Lewis, is the depth and subtlety of this author's investigation of the demonic trilogy of temptation, corruption, and sin.

No major character in this first book, and perhaps every one of them during the second and third of the trilogy to come, escapes putting at least a tentative toe onto this tristep stairway to Hades. All of them, from its purest, most unsullied heroes to its blackest and bloodiest villains, find themselves tottering on one or another of these fearsome steps in severe danger of stumbling to the next stage down, or even lurching into the fatal, final hurtle to the abyss itself.



Barbara Hambly's Knight of the Demon Queen, *from Del Rey*

If this sort of setup is to work to its full advantage it is, of course, highly important that the differing characters undergoing this cosmic testing be as varied and as richly developed as possible and it is our good fortune that Siegel has a near "Dickensonian" flair in that direction. She has a great magpie instinct for plucking out and using classic archetypal heroes and fiends that we affectionately recognize at once from fantastic old movies and books and then expanding and elaborating these tried-and-true images, investing them with unique and completely credible personal twists and turns that expand them into believable, brand-new beings.

As in the Pullman work, the heroine is a plucky young female who is a match—and oftentimes more than a match—for the males in the tale. Her name is Fernanda, aka Fern Capel.

As the story opens she is busy simultaneously coping with the usual multitude of tribulations attendant to the transition to womanhood and the job of keeping an eye on her widowed father, Robin, lest he be entrapped by one of the less satisfactory huntresses of someone as likable and well-to-do as himself. Unfortunately Fern finds even her very best efforts in this latter department thrown seriously off track with the arrival of the very thin but undeniably attractive Allison Redmond who "moves like water" and is the personal assistant of the extraordinarily suave Javier Holt, a sinister art gallery owner.

I'd like to take a little pause here, by the way, to thank Ms. Siegel for being the first author I've run into who has had the inspiration to use an art gallery owner as a lead villain, for in my experience art gallery owners—with a *very* few exceptions who are, oddly, particularly nice people—the most rapacious, exploitive, and unnecessarily sadistically destructive crew I've encountered in a highly varied career. You've heard bad things said about used car salesmen, Hollywood moguls, and advertising folk? Their nastinesses pale into insignificance next to this lot. I've witnessed more than one friend destroyed by their needless cruelties. Do be careful, dear reader, if you wander within their grasp.

In any case, this Allison person soon has Robin thoroughly under her spell and in no time at all she has estab-

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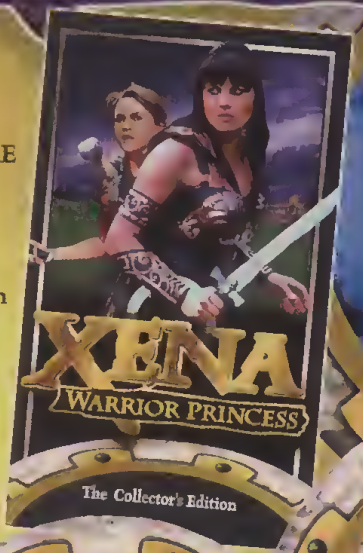
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lished herself as a regular in the interestingly spooky old house in Yorkshire that Robin has inherited from a distant relative, and she is clearly up to no good.

The old house has a large amount of stuff in and around it which puzzles and disturbs both Fern and her brother, Will. There is a stone idol in the study with sleepy lids and a really nasty smile; a very old ship's figurehead still attached to a surviving chunk of its prow; an old rock that vaguely resembles a sitting man, which can be seen from the window of Fern's bedroom except when it very mysteriously isn't there; and something that pads down the dark hallways of the house at night and snuffles at your door.

And the place is loaded with interesting characters ranging from good old Mrs. Wicklow, who is its housekeeper, to Ragginbone, who is a really interestingly different take on the Gandalf notion which I am very anxious to see what Siegel does with as this trilogy unfolds, and an extremely long-in-the-tooth werewolf named Lougarry.

But this old dark house is not the only spooky locale explored in this book: We also get a chance to live in and to explore a highly satisfactory and very well-developed version of the fabled city of Atlantis. Not just its palaces and temples and fine squares, but its watery, vermin-infested underground and even a few of its darker dungeons.

Among the characters encountered here are Refarl Dev, more familiarly known as Raf, who is a highly entertaining and likable version of the Thief of Baghdad sort of rogue given Siegel's own interesting spin; Uuinarde, a nymphelin, which is Siegel's variant on the mermaid legend (who will obviously be a continuing element in the story) and—I've saved the best for the last—the astoundingly evil and dangerous Queen of Atlantis: Zohrane.

She alone should almost ensure an eventual film version of this epic as she is truly spectacular in her endless malevolence and has that eerie likability which only the really first-class villains own. Right up there with Ming the Magnificent and that nasty lady with 10,000 dalmatians. Or is it 1,000? I won't say a word about her as Siegel does a lovely job of revealing her bit by bit and scene by scene. Suffice it to say I can't wait to see what she does next.

Excellent entertainment, marvelous dream material, and a really fun read.

It may well be that Barbara Hambly has struggled mightily to turn out each and every single page of the many fine books she's written. It is possible she agonizes over each word. Mayhap she writes each sentence 20 times or more before she even begins to be moderately satisfied with the damned thing, and that when she finally finishes one single precious page she quits in exhaustion only to destroy it entirely when she reads it the next day and finds she must go over the whole hellish process once more.

All that may well indeed be the case, but Ms. Hambly is such a born storyteller, such a smoothly natural spinner of tales, I have a repeated fantasy that what she actually does is to step out of her house and into the primeval bit of virgin forest that has somehow survived the whole growing of Los Angeles and covers her backyard. There she sits gracefully on a smooth stone, gazes into a crackling campfire (which may or may not be gas-fed) and, leaning close to an artificial tree stump containing a concealed recording device, she begins telling her latest tale in a singsong, melodious voice and does not stop speaking until at least three chapters are fully spun. Then, and only then, does she quit fire and forest for her lunch.

For some reason I have missed reading *Dragonsbane* and *Dragonshadow*, the first two of the series that has now reached ***Knight of the Demon Queen*** (Del Rey Books, NYC; 263 pp.; hardcover; $24.00), the book under discussion. I thought about it and it occurred to me that it might be just the thing to read the third in a series after reading the first in a trilogy.

I opened the book and read its first short paragraph: "Jenny Waynest's son Ian took poison on the night of winter's first snowfall. He was thirteen."

Of course I could not take my eyes from the page after that, so I shuffled slowly over to a chair by a lamp as I read the second paragraph, settled into the chair as I read the

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third, and so on until a phone ringing or a fax ratcheting in made me blink and I realized and was sorry to discover I was more than halfway through the book.

She had done it again, had Barbara Hambly. Hooked me hopelessly with no seeming effort at all.

I don't know how old Lord John Aversin and his wife Jenny Waynest are when the series begins but by book three they are middle-aged and badly battered. Nasty demons and warlocks have had their evil way with them even if they have received some reasonably effective counterpunches, and neither poor John nor Jenny have by any means recovered from the attack.

It's a nice change starting out with your central, point-of-view characters old and hanging on only because of remarkable endurance and hard-earned savvy. Usually that role falls to those in advisory capacities, such as Gandalf. Mostly heroic fantasies are essentially coming-of-age novels where some fresh and feisty sprout bites off an adventure because of being too young and innocent to know any better and by the time they have finished it, and we leave them smiling in triumph or dead, they've usually merely achieved young man- or womanhood.

It really adds an interesting and refreshing element. A trip through the various hells depicted in *Knight of the Demon Queen* become even more hellish if your hero and heroine don't only have to manage attacks by fearsomely bizarre beasties but must also mind how they climb a high, steep hill to avoid being winded when they encounter such a beastie at its crest; and it does add a fine new element of risk if they must ever be careful to watch their sometimes wandering minds lest a surfeit of memories from long years back float into view and distract them from keeping alert to the present moment and to the possibility of yet another new encounter with yet another monster.

Among many other demonstrations of Hambly's abilities as a master fabulist is the seeming ease with which she gives you all you need to know about what's happened in the previous books. There are expository pauses, of course, but you really have to peer like an eagle to spot them. Mostly they come in impenetrable disguises as the action smoothly progresses.

And of course, being by Hambly, it's a whopping adventure. There is a marvelous cast of really devilish demons; all manner of interesting concepts such as the notion that there are many hells and that they are all in fiendish competition with one another, and you will come across an astounding amount of fresh information concerning dragons. Take this lovely exchange between the dragon Morkeleb, who has grown curious about creatures like ourselves, and Jenny:

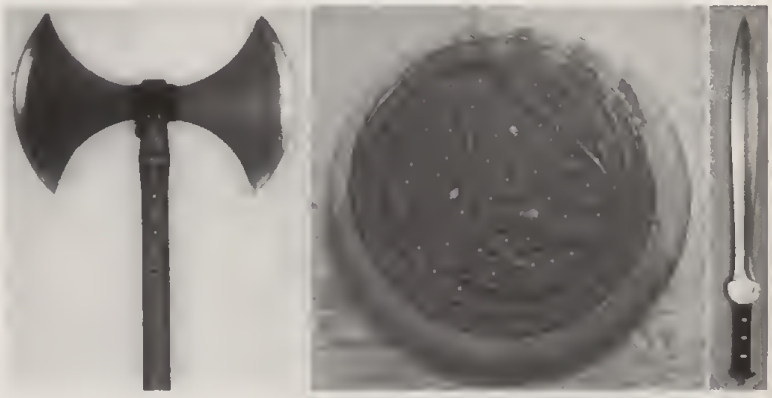
"The dragon speaks first:

'They are like tales, each inscribed upon a grass blade, your people.



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'Each blade is a world. You see the spot of sunlight on the oceans surface, and yet beneath it is miles deep. This is what I am.'

'You are more.'

'No. Being human is more than you think it to be.'"

Personally, I think that tells you a lot about dragons!

A while back it was my pleasure to give a favorable review to Wandering Star's sumptuous edition of Robert E. Howard's *The Savage Tales of Solomon Kane* and now I am delighted to announce that they have brought out another Robert E. Howard collection.

This one, ***The Ultimate Triumph*** (Wandering Star, London, England; hardcover; 316 pp.; trade edition $50; limited edition of 1,500 slip-cased with previously unpublished color plates $80; ultra deluxe limited leather edition including additional color plate $425), concentrates on writings by Howard which are most specifically and directly associated with the notion of barbarism, a theme that profoundly obsessed the author throughout his creative life. It is—highly appropriately—illustrated by the illustrator more associated with that theme, and with turning Howard's violently imaginative notions into visible images, than any other artist, living or dead—Frank Frazetta—and, as if that were not enough, there is also a very touching and informative foreword by Mr. Frazetta.

The collection appropriately lunges into action with the original Conan adventure *Beyond the Black River*; continues with the first printing ever of the original manuscript of *The House of Arabus* which has not been "improved" by other hands; *Spears of Clontarf; The Night of the Wolf; Spear and Fang; The Valley of the Worm;* and *Lord of Samarcand.*

There is a small anthology of his barbaric poems, an excellent Introduction by Rusty Burke, a marvelous collection of Howard's letters to Howard Phillips Lovecraft on the topic of Barbarism vs. Civilization, a detailed chronology of Howard and two concluding essays: *Waiting for the Barbarians* by Patrice Louinet and Frazetta, and Robert E. Howard; *The Power of Passion* by Dr. David Winiewicz.

As you see, there are several editions. The black and white has numerous drawings by Frazetta, including many heretofore unpublished, and is marvelous, but if you have the money and admire these two unique creators I would very much recommend that you spring for one of the color-plate editions as they really are spectacular and do complete the effect of joining Howard's vision with Frazetta's as has never been done before.

Gahan Wilson

The False House, *by James Stoddard, Warner Aspect, mass market, 401 pp., $6.50*

Old-fashioned heroism, metaphysical vistas, affectionate homages, a splendid objective correlative for the awe-inspiring mystery of the universe: that's what James Stoddard provided in his award-winning first novel, *The High House* (1998), and that's what he continues to supply in the sequel, *The False House.* Any beginner's shakiness or uncertainty or overzealousness that might have occasionally marred the first book has disappeared, and Stoddard moves easily beyond freshman status into the realm of journeyman fantasist.

If you read the first book—in which we were introduced to the High House, Evenmere, and its fledgling Master, Carter Anderson—then you know the setup here; but novices are swiftly brought up to speed. The High House, a simple mansion from the outside, contains whole dominions within, entire countries that blend parlor and prairie, cellar and canyon, attic and arctic. Beset by enemies calling themselves Anarchists, the house was saved from destruction by Carter's bold assumption of his father's legacy and by the heroics of his loyal retainers. In this book the Anarchists (much more fully fleshed out) have regrouped and devised their deadliest scheme yet: magically to mirror Evenmere in a debased parody that exerts a malign influence on the real house. They control this architectural weapon through the enslavement of a new character, a young girl named Lizbeth who, along with Carter's new wife, Sarah (also charmingly rendered), brings a welcome feminine influence to Stoddard's mythos.

Stoddard's love for the classic fantasies reintroduced by Lin Carter in the 'sixties and 'seventies (explicit and implicit allusions to



these masterworks abound) guides his hand well here, as he imagines archetypical situations that resonate both with those old books and with the true workings of the human spirit. Both Carter and his friends must undergo personality-shattering tribulations, mainly in the Anarchist's stronghold, the Outer Darkness, and these soul-battles threaten more than the physical violence, which at times partakes of L. Frank Baum's Oz-style rough-and-tumble. Rich with catharsis and craft, *The False House* rears skyward like a real monument.

***Dark Sister,** by Graham Joyce, Tor, hardcover, 300 pp., $22.95*

The Fantasy field owes an immense debt to historian-novelist-mythographer Robert Graves for his *The White Goddess* (1948). This revisionist takes on old, suppressed mystery religions—Druids, Wiccans, Eleusinians—opened up vast realms of psychogeography that could be fruitfully explored in fiction. There must have been something in the air during Graves's heyday, since such contemporaneous books as Fritz Leiber's *Conjure Wife* (originally published in *Unknown* in 1943) and Jack Williamson's *Darker Than You Think* (definitive version 1948) tapped into this same buried mystical stratum. Ever since, tales of the survival into the present of the Old Craft, of Goddess Worship, and lunar deities have formed an integral part of the Fantasy genre, a fine recent example being Liz Hand's *Waking the Moon* (1994).

Now arrives another masterful excursion into this nighted land, Graham Joyce's *Dark Sister*. Like his UK peer Robert Holdstock, Joyce has the ability to merge pitch-perfect realism with shivery uncanniness. Joyce's world is one where borders between dimensions are fluid, and the subtle seepage between zones provides all the requisite terror and epiphanies.

This novel focuses on Alex and Maggie and their young children, Sam and Amy. The former are a husband and wife fighting the seemingly inevitable dissolution of their once-strong marriage under emotional stresses all too familiar: the tug between family and job, partnership and individuality. Maggie's fascinated discovery during household renovations of a witch's diary is the catalyst that propels the mundane bickering of the adults into dangerous hermetic levels. Souls and bodies of parents and children alike become pawns in a struggle that transcends centuries.

Joyce's writing is stylistically impeccable. Such scenes as Maggie's first supernatural flight, where she rides a "hot cinnamon wind," capture the otherworldly just as vividly as Joyce builds a more mundane incident like the seduction of a babysitter. And despite this book being foremost Maggie's story, Joyce does not villainize Alex, portraying both spouses as a mix of virtues and vices. A cast of idiosyncratic secondary characters charms as well.

Graham Joyce both depicts and exemplifies the eruption of magic into our sometimes weary world.

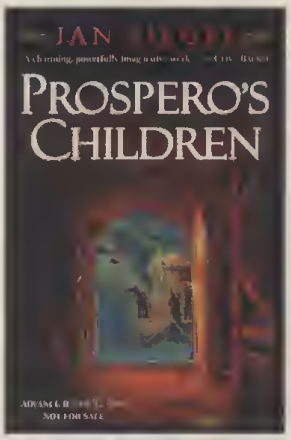
***The Merlin of St. Gilles' Well,** by Ann Chamberlin, Tor, hardcover, 320 pp., $23.95*

A young boy destined for greatness being tutored by a crochety old wizard named Merlin. Surely we are back in the marvelous world of T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* (1958). Not so fast. This time the book unfairly distilled into such a shorthand formulation is Ann Chamberlin's *The Merlin of St. Gilles' Well* which has naught to do with Arthurian legends, but rather concerns a different story-cycle, that of Joan of Arc. And although by the close of this book the Maid of Orleans is still only an offstage infant, her presence looms over a host of other bright personages any reader will surely come to cherish.

Jean—or Yann—Le Drapier is our narrator, circa 1400 in a complexly recreated France. Pierced as a youth in his right hand by an arrow loosed from a noble's bow, Yann is taken for help to nearby St. Gilles' Well, a shrine run by a monk who bears the hereditary name of the great wizard. The monk recognizes in Yann immense talents cognate with the old Druidic/Goddess worship to which Merlin himself secretly adheres. (There's Graves again.) Thus begins Yann's long occult tutoring, complicated by the fact that the noble who wounded him and thus incurred a blood-debt is Guy de Rais, soon to become the father of the infamous murderer Gilles de Rais, Yann's "milk brother."

Between this opening incident and the close of this captivating novel ("Book One of the Joan of Arc Tapestries"), when Yann has become a young man embarking into the larger world, we will encounter enough political, supernatural, and personal upheavals to fill a lesser trilogy. Chamberlin's lyrical prose evokes the tumult and mystery of her chosen era, and the often-retrospective voice she provides for Yann is beguiling and believable. Nor is Chamberlin afraid to portray the Old Craft in all its controversial sides, including human sacrifice and ritual orgies.







Yann's course is plainly going to intersect with Joan's in subsequent volumes, where he is foreshadowed to become her tutor. Such an intersection of destinies should be a poignant crossroads at which the Dark Man himself will materialize in full glory.

***Dragonholder,** by Todd McCaffrey, Del Rey, hardcover, 113 pp., $19.95*

Readers of Anne McCaffrey's many novels will surely rejoice in a capsule biography written by her son, Todd McCaffrey: *Dragonholder*. With rambling, amateur's charm—a professional writer might have realized it wasn't necessary, for instance, to annotate the existence of Stonehenge—the book offers insights into the people and places and pets behind Mama McCaffrey's fictions. No pretense at objectivity or documentation is made—McCaffrey's ex-husband comes off particularly badly in this one-sided account—but on an anecdotal level, this book evokes a few hours spent by *Dragonhold*'s fireside chatting pleasantly about triumphs and tribulations gone by.

Paul Di Filippo

***Etruscans: Beloved of the Gods,** by Morgan Llywelyn and Michael Scott, Tor, 320 pp., hardcover; $24.95*

If you're tired of foreign realms and unknown worlds of Fantasy that resonate or mimic Tolkien in the worst of all possible ways, then it might be time for you to look for something a little closer to home. It might be time for you to re-evaluate your needs as a Fantasy reader. It might be time for you to come back to Earth and read Morgan Llywelyn and Michael Scott's *Etruscans: Beloved of the Gods*.

A wonderful blend of sword and sorcery and spiritualism, *Etruscans* is the tale of Horatrim, a boy of somewhat dubious genealogy. Set in the early days of the Roman Empire, as Rome is growing by leaps and bounds and the beautiful and noble Etruscan civilization in Italy is in decline, an Etruscan lady is violated by a rogue *siu*, or demon. Accidentally impregnating her, she gives birth to a child who grows and matures at an alarming rate.

Continued on page 81

BY HEINZ INSU FENKL

The Binary Serpent ... he's not bad—he's just mythologized that way.

NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY BEAST OF THE FIELD WHICH THE LORD God had made. —*Genesis 3:1.* 1. Like most children, I was taught that snakes were dangerous and bad. Since I grew up in Korea—not generally known for its poisonous snakes—it was unlikely that I would ever run across a dangerous snake unless I happened to be in some outlying rural area; snakes certainly did not pose the danger they do in places like India, where cobras are still responsible for thousands of deaths a year. And yet I was told lots of horror stories about snakes; on the one hand the stories revealed a certain cultural fascination with snakes and on the other a terrible and irrational fear of them. One of my aunts loved to reminisce about the time she had fallen into a crevice one spring and found herself in a den full of what she thought, at first, to be "writhing intestines." My mother would warn me that if I was ever chased by a snake I should run in a straight line, since snakes slither from side to side—unless, of course, I happened to be running downhill. Then I should weave from side to side because a determined serpent would turn itself into a hoop by taking its tail in its mouth and roll down after me.

In Korean culture, the word for snake, *sa*, is coincidentally a homonym for the number 4 and the word for death. In Korean locker rooms, in hotel corridors, and in buildings, you often find the number 4 missing (as the number 13 is often missing in the West), and one of the most feared creatures in Korean folklore, in the same category as the fox demon, is the snake woman.



Many cultures view snakes as a bad omen. Laocoön *and his sons suffer the wrath of the gods in this classic painting by El Greco.*

It wasn't until I was in my teens that I began to notice some inherent contradictions in the representations of snakes in Korea. By then my mother had told me my birth dream—the dream she had just before giving birth to me—and she swore to me that it was both an auspicious and important one. For me, the dream would be important enough to include as the opening of my first book, *Memories of My Ghost Brother*:

She is walking along a palace wall, on an avenue white with fallen cherry petals. She breathes the springtime fragrance and sings a country song until, turning the corner, she is silenced by the magnificence of the palace gate; and there, hearing a strange noise, she stands quietly to listen. A giant serpent, thick as a pine tree, dangles its head from atop the palace gate and whispers to her in human speech, "I have something to tell you." The serpent is so long its glistening body encircles the entire palace grounds; its tail dangles just opposite its head. "Come here, I have something to tell you," it says. "I have something very important to tell you."

Most readers will immediately recognize here the symbol of the *ouroboros*, the serpent that forms a circle by taking its tail in its mouth. It's a hard one to avoid these days since it's the logo for the TV show *Millennium* and also for the high-tech Lucent Technologies company (though the red circle is stylized and often taken to be a Taoist/Buddhist circle). *Ouroboros* represents a number of things consistent with the serpent: regeneration, rebirth, cyclical nature, wholeness, wisdom, enlightenment. Its circular configuration reinforces qualities already generally associated with the positive interpretations of the serpent that are nearly universal among traditional cultures.

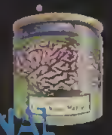
My mother was always an interpreter of dreams; though she did it only informally, her friends would often ask her advice about particularly troubling details in theirs. For my birth dream, my mother's reading was odd even to my teenage self. She focused on the palace

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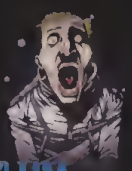
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Some painters, such as Michaelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, depict the biblical serpent as a woman.

wall, and said that the fact that the serpent encircled it meant that my future occupation would be related to the government—diplomacy, perhaps. She said the dream was auspicious because to see a snake in a dream is good luck.

I knew, without asking, that in the folklore of Korean dream interpretation, to see a bad thing is often a good thing. For example, to have your house burn down in a dream is one of the most auspicious signs you can receive. People will buy lottery tickets after a dream like that (or, more likely, be conned into making a bad investment). The greatest possible dream is to see a dragon—to have a "dragon dream." What I did not know as a teenager was that dragons and large serpents are closely associated in Korean and other East Asian cultures. According to one folk belief, serpents that are virtuous endure thousands of years of privation, and when they are finally deemed worthy, they are transformed into dragons that ascend into heaven on a rainbow. In fact, in both Chinese and Korean iconography (often in decorative motifs in palaces and temples), one finds the symbol of the dragon curled into a circle, taking its tail in its mouth. It usually clutches a circular jewel, which represents immortality and enlightenment.

One of my uncles had to confront the contradictory way in which snakes were presented in Korean popular culture. When I asked him why there were bottled snakes displayed in the drugstores alongside the bottled ginseng roots (in both traditional and Western-style pharmacies in those days), he explained that sometimes things that were poisonous could be used as a powerful medicine. This was quite similar, in my mind, to the logic of dream interpretation, but my uncle's logic was to talk about how ginseng—which everyone knew to be the most potent of medicines—tasted especially bad. He pointed out that all medicines tasted foul and would probably be mistaken for poison if their effects were not known by the learned herb doctors; even Western medicine—aspirin, for example—was foul-tasting.

I am still haunted by images of those pale snakes preserved in alcohol-filled medical jars. Pharmacies vied for the largest selection and the largest specimens of both snakes and ginseng root; the displays were truly grotesque and disquieting, and the magnified and distorted images of the serpents and roots behind the discolored alcohol suspension must have evoked some primal mixture of fear and awe to add potency to the medicines drawn from them. After seeing such exhibits at Korean drugstores, the odd contradiction in the Western symbol of the caduceus—the two serpents coiled around the winged staff—which I saw emblazoned on all the accouterments of the U.S. Army Medical Corps did not strike me as the least bit unusual.

2. In Western culture the diametrically opposed meanings of the snake—what I call the phenomenon of "the binary serpent"—is not all that different from what I experienced as a child in Korea. The contradictions are perhaps not quite as overt in the way they play out in the surface of everyday life, but they are there—and deeply rooted, suggestive of the ancient Goddess traditions upon which the Judeo-Christian culture built itself. What's especially interesting to me is to discover that tracing the source of the serpent symbol, regardless of whether one begins in the East or West, leads to essentially the same sources.

It is easy to get to the primary image of the serpent in Western culture. In the Book of Genesis, which the Judaic and Christian religions share as a primary text, the serpent is responsible for the temptation of Eve and Adam and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The Lord permits Adam and Eve to eat from any tree in the Garden, but he is explicit in his prohibition: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The serpent, in tempting Eve, actually reveals to her—albeit indirectly—that God has deceived her; he says, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." As we all know, Eve eats the fruit and also convinces Adam to eat it, and they do not immediately die. God soon discovers their transgression, but it is the serpent he punishes first. He says, "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed.... upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." Thus the continued enmity between snakes and humans, what biologists suggest is a reference to the instinctive fear humans have of reptiles from back in the days when our hominid ancestors were competing with snakes on the African savannah. As a legacy of our biological heritage and God's curse on the serpent, we still have figures of speech like "snake," "snake in the grass," "pit viper," and "snake eyes"—all negatively charged labels linked with danger, deceit, and death.

But who, exactly, was the serpent? Genesis doesn't reveal the serpent's identity. (In fact, even the serpent's gender is an odd mystery: We assume it to be male, but in a large number of paintings that depict the temptation of Adam and Eve, the serpent coiled around the tree has breasts—another indication of the underlying Goddess culture.) From common understanding of biblical texts, we can gather that the serpent is Satan, a name that means "adversary" in Hebrew; but through a problem in translation, he is also erroneously associated with one of God's Archangels, none other than Lucifer (variously "Son of Morning," "Morning Star," and "Bearer of Light"), who is the highest of the high among the angelic hosts. "Lucifer" was originally meant to be the Latinized rendition of "Helal, son of Shahar," a reference to a Babylonian king, but the name became associated with Satan, and his story (which is the central narrative of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*) is the one that has survived in the popular imagination. Lucifer is the Archangel who tried to usurp God's place in heaven and was cast down into hell as punishment. We can make much of this translation error, but this mistake and its resulting associations between the Devil, Lucifer, Satan, and the serpent of Eden reveal something far more significant and interesting about symbols and culture.

Over time, by a logic greater than the intention of any single person or even the

combined intentions of a series of people, societies cause meaningful symbols to become what are called "summarizing symbols," images that economically represent layers and layers of collected meaning—sometimes even meanings that are contradictory. The binary serpent is a classic example of this phenomenon. Consider that in the Genesis story, the serpent (also known as Satan, Prince of Lies) actually tells Eve the truth about the fruit; he exposes *God's* lie (what we might call a "white lie"). What's more important, in eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve and Adam have learned to judge both God and the serpent. God feels quite threatened, now that the fruit has opened the humans' eyes and made them like gods; out of fear that they will also eat from the tree of life and become immortal, He casts them out of Eden and posts the flaming sword to keep them away.

It is beyond the scope of this column to argue or even summarize all the particulars of this scenario—there are volumes and volumes of biblical lore that review these very issues from a startlingly vast range of viewpoints. What I want to show is something much simpler: That even without discussing the specifics, we can see that the serpent is closely associated with giving humans access to the knowledge of good and evil, a god-like quality consistent with the idea of illumination or enlightenment. At the same time, it is clear to God the humans' enlightenment might cause them to gain immortality, thereby associating the serpent with the idea of gaining access to eternal life. All of these associations are consistent with the positive qualities of the serpent in pre-biblical Goddess lore. The text of Genesis may be one of the best examples of a culture trying to change the meanings of symbols appropriated from earlier cultures; what my speculation shows is how this is almost impossible to do. The original meaning of symbols (in this case the serpent) will almost always slip through future overlays, particularly when the revisions attempt to place opposite values on those symbols.

A closer look at the etymologies of some of the word associations makes this binary quality clearer (and even more complex). The word "serpent" actually has the same root as another biblical term, *seraph*, which refers to the highest of God's angels. "Seraph" can be translated as "fiery serpent." The underlying meaning of the word "devil" is the same as that for *deva*, an angel in the Hindu pantheon, both terms meaning "divine." Satan can be traced back to the 19th-dynasty Egyptian Set, whose symbol is the serpent. According to some sources, the name "Satan" is the Hebrew adaptation of the Egyptian *Set-En* or *Set-An*. The *en* and *an* seem to refer back to even earlier sources, the Sumerian *An*nunaki ("Those Who Came from Heaven to Earth") and *En*ki, who is often represented as half serpent and half man (in Sumerian lore he is the adversary of

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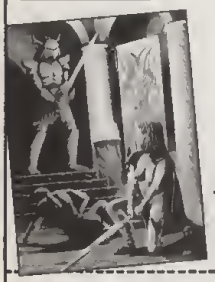


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his brother, Enlil, whom some scholars argue may be the origin of the Hebrew Jehovah).

Early Christian Gnostics, like the practitioners of Kundalini Yoga (which focuses on releasing the "serpent fire" to gain illumination), associated the serpent with the human spinal column and the medulla. (Contemporary biologists refer to this structure, which is the basis of the limbic system, as "the reptile brain" upon which the higher mammalian brain is built like an overlay.) The Gnostics also associated the serpent with Christ: Among the most interesting Gnostic symbols is the crucified serpent who bears the face of Christ. As late as the 16th century, one could find German coins which showed a crucified Christ on one side and a crucified serpent on the other.

The logic of this connection would take a book to explore fully, but there is a biblical reference that immediately helps clarify it. In the Gospel of John, we find the line: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." This refers to the fact that, during the Exodus, Moses raised a serpent on a copper pole to heal his people and cure snake bites. The logic of the Gnostic serpent-Christ also makes sense if you consider that a snake, in shedding its skin, is not only figuratively reborn, it also gives birth to its new self. This means that the new snake is the product of a virgin birth, and it is simultaneously its own parent and child. Christ, as we know, is born of a virgin and he is simultaneously Father and Son; after the crucifixion, he is also resurrected. Like the *ouroboros*, Christ is also the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end. (Of course, Christ's mother is Mary, a figure resonant with the Great Goddess.)

3. Since I'm wrapping up an essay about the serpent, it's time to circle back to some issues I left dangling in my opening reminiscences about my childhood. Another irony: It's in studying Western folklore that I finally found an adequate explanation for the link between the snake, healing, death, and the number 4 in Korean culture. Perhaps it's only coincidence, but the Greek god Hermes, who is also associated with Christ, brings all of these elements together: He carries the caduceus (two serpents coiled around a staff), which is the symbol of the healer; he is the one who leads the dead to the underworld; and his symbol is the Hermetic cross, the number 4 poised above a crescent moon (a symbol for Mary and the Goddess). My mother might also be happy to learn that Hermes is also linked with diplomacy, which is the future she foresaw for me when she interpreted her birth dream. She might be less happy to learn that he's also associated with thieves (though Christ also has the odd association with thieves because he is crucified between two of them). The dragon and serpent are linked in the Hermes figure just as they are in the East: the word "dragon" comes from the Greek *drakon*, which means "serpent."



Albrecht Dürer's more traditional view of the serpent with Adam and Eve.

But I knew none of these things in my youth, and I did my share of regretfully evil things to snakes. When I was 12, compelled by my delinquent friends, I decided to test the story that a snake will not die until the Sun goes down. We had all heard the claim: You can cut off a snake's head, but the body will not stop moving until sunset.

In a patch of farmer's woods in southern Germany, we caught a small green garter snake and cut its head off with a U.S. Army pocket knife. Indeed, the body did not seem to die. One of my friends decided to make our test utilitarian—he needed a watchband, and so he decided to skin the snake. We were all fascinated when we could see the heart still beating through the translucent carcass, which we hung over a stick. But our patience was not as strong as our guilt and our repulsion. We buried the skinned snake and went home long before sunset. The watchband never got made.

When I look back on this misadventure I can't help but be amused at the ironies under the surface. What motivated the memory—as I thought about this essay—was the fact that something had compelled one of us to unconsciously make a symbolic *ouroboros* out of the snake's skin, causing its death to be associated with time, circularity, and rebirth. And over the years, by haunting me with guilt and curiosity with its memory alive in me, that poor snake has also contributed, in its way, to the pursuit of wisdom.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as ***serpents****, and harmless as doves.*

—Matthew 10:16

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Those who want to look at the serpent motif among other folktales about animal brides drawn from around the world may want to read *The Serpent and the Swan: The Animal Bride in Folklore and Literature*, by Boria Sax.

For general reference to serpent imagery, I recommend: *Serpent Imagery and Symbolism*, by Lura Pedrini; *The Worship of the Serpent Traced Throughout the World and Its Traditions Referred to the Events in Paradise*, by John Bathurst Deane; *Indian Serpent-Lore or the Nagas in Hindu Legend and Art*, by J.P. Vogel; *Ophiolatreia : An Account of the Rites and Mysteries Connected with the Origin, Rise and Development of Serpent Worship*, by Hargrave Jennings; and *The Encircled Serpent: A Study of Serpent Symbolism in All Countries and Ages*, by M. Oldfield Howey. *Serpent Myth* by W.W. Westcott (ed. Darcy Kuntz) is a fascinating discussion of the serpent symbol from the perspective an initiate of the Golden Dawn Society (of which W.B. Yeats was a long-time member). *The Wisdom of the Serpent: The Myths of Death, Rebirth, and Resurrection*, ed. Joseph L. Henderson, offers a general discussion as well as a more psychologically centered examination of the serpent's role in shamanic initiation, poetry, art, and dreaming; those who are interested in Joseph Campbell will particularly enjoy this book. Also from a psychological perspective is *The Rainbow Serpent: Bridge to Consciousness*, by Robert L. Gardner; this book looks at Australian aboriginal myth in light of the dreamtime, archetypes, and the collective unconscious.

For those particularly interested in the serpent and biblical lore I recommend: *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, by Elaine Pagels, author of *The Gnostic Gospels; The Serpent of Paradise: The Incredible Story of How Satan's Rebellion Serves God's Purposes*, by Erwin W. Lutzer; *The Serpent Was Wiser: A New Look at Genesis 1-11*, by Richard S. Hanson; *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament: A Linguistic, Archaeological, and Literary Study*, by Karen Randolph Joines; *Trail of the Serpent: The Story of Satan Told in the Bible, from the Fall to the Lake of Fire*, by Robert Peterson.

Those interested in the serpent and its relation to women's lore may want to look at *Power of Raven, Wisdom of Serpent: Celtic Women's Spirituality*, by Noragh Jones, which examines the intersection of pagan and Christian tradition in Scottish women's folklore. Mary Condren's *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion, and Power in Celtic Ireland* focuses on the lore surrounding the Celtic Bridget figure, also tracing the overlap and disjuncture of pagan and Catholic culture.

There are also numerous books that examine the serpent symbol and its relation to kundalini: *Serpent of Fire: A Modern View of Kundalini*, by Darrel Irving, et al. is a guide to activating one's kundalini (and it includes appropriate warnings). For a firsthand account of both the dangers and the transformational power of awakened kundalini, have a look at Patricia Anne Bloise's *Dancing with the Serpent*, which also provides a general overview and history of the concept. *The Green Serpent and the Tree*, by James N. Judd, looks at the parallels between the concept of chakras in kundalini yoga and the 10 sefirot of the Kabbalah. ❧





THE SEVENTH SLEEPER

Heroes are determined by the society they spring from. So are villains.

BY KATE RIEDEL
Illustration by J.K. Potter

WHAT HAPPENS after a war arises from what happened during the war, just as the war itself happened because of what came before. And so, your patience, please. To tell you the story of *der alt Graf*, I must also tell you my story.

My father owned, among other properties—he was an entrepreneur in real estate—a large house in Munich which he had acquired cheaply during the war when the property of some Jewish families had been offered for sale. After the war, when I entered university, he gave me an allowance for living in and looking after this house.

I, being young and but newly free of those deprivations visited on us by Eisenhower in repudiation of his own German ancestors, preferred the life of a rich man's son to hard work and study. I attended classes only when examinations were imminent. When my expenses outran my allowance, I entered into a business arrangement with a cousin who was employed by the railway in Salzburg, across the border in Austria.

While the train for Yugoslavia laid over in the railway yards, my cousin would fasten a large iron pipe, fitted with a cap and brackets, under one of the wooden passenger seats, where it looked like nothing more than a steam heater. That pipe—a new one for each trip—was stuffed with nylon stockings that my girlfriend bought at the American and Russian PXs.

Just outside of Zagreb, we would unfasten the pipe, stuff the stockings in a rucksack, and throw the pipe out the window. The stockings sold, we would exchange



our dinars for American dollars, which we would smuggle back in a condom shoved up the anus.

My cousin and I took turns traveling to Yugoslavia on that train. At the border the military police searched suitcases and sometimes passengers, but they never noticed the pipe.

On my last trip, the train was met at the border by a Yugoslav guard holding one of our discarded pipes.

I did not wait to discover how he had found it. About the time the train was nearing Zagreb, I was hidden in a truck loaded with scrap metal, heading north across Austria. Later, in the dark, while the driver took a leak on one side of the truck, I slipped off the other side. Once well off the road, rather than stumble around in the dark, I sat down with my back against a tree to wait for daylight.

Above me the road let straight to a castle, a fairy tale turreted *schloss.*

I OPENED MY EYES TO THE ROSY MORNING LIGHT REFLECTED FROM blue-snowed mountain peaks gleaming through the pines. In the distance below I could hear cowbells. I followed the sound and emerged onto a narrow road. Below were pine woods and presumably pastures; above me the road led straight to a castle, a fairy-tale turreted *schloss*. I could surely get directions there, and perhaps even breakfast.

Hope of breakfast faded when I reached the gate, which hung slightly ajar and sagged on its hinges. But the coat of arms worked into the wrought iron resembled that of the Wittlesbachs, and if this castle belonged to a branch of that family, then I had almost certainly crossed the border from Austria into Bavaria.

Beyond the gate, an overgrown avenue led between old beeches to a circular drive before the castle.

It was not big as castles go, but big enough in comparison to modern residences of even our wealthier families. Peaked towers rose into the blue sky at each corner, and marble steps swept up to a wide portico and a great door.

Four Cupids stood, each over his individual fountain, now dry, set into the wall on either side of twin arches flanking the portico. The arm of one Cupid lay shattered in the basin below; another's penis had crumbled away to reveal the corroded pipe from which water had once flowed.

Pigeons, foraging among the weeds, flew up to take refuge in the unshuttered, broken windows as I passed through one of those arches into an inner courtyard with flagstone paths; a dry, weed-choked fountain; and an apple tree that still bore fruit.

The front of the castle was comparatively modern, perhaps an 18th-century country home of some aristocratic family. The wings, on the north and south sides, pierced by arches presumably leading to grounds and outbuildings, were of the same period. But the western side of the quadrangle, straight ahead of me as I came through the front arch, was much older, built into the mountain itself, with the round arches and narrow windows typical of the Middle Ages.

This part of the castle was entered through a deep recess, almost cavelike, and ending at a heavy wooden door held in place by ornate iron hinges and locks forged by a giant, by the look of them. Carved into either side, in that squat, solemn, square style of the Middle Ages, were friezes of figures, three on one side, four on the other.

I forgot my desire to get back to Munich. Back in the sunlit courtyard I counted stories and windows, estimated interior spaces. I was, after all, my father's son.

My stomach reminded me that I had not eaten for nearly 24 hours. I reached up and plucked an apple from the tree, then froze in surprise when someone called "Halt!"

The old man, seemingly materialized from nowhere, looked to be at least 70 years old. He gave the impression of being tall, although in his youth he could have been little taller than I, and I am only of average height. His hair was white, his eyes black and bright like a bird's, and an eagle's beak nose overhung his thin, straight mouth. His clothes had once been of good quality, perhaps his master's cast-offs, but now the shirt was soiled at collar and cuffs, the suit rumpled, and both bore the remains of more than one meal.

"You are trespassing." He spoke in Bavarian-country German.

"I apologize. I became lost, hiking in the mountains—"

"A hiking vacation, eh?" He snorted. "Where's your rucksack? Your walking stick? Never mind, you can leave now."

"Can you tell me, please, who owns this place?" I asked.

Now he laughed outright, a high-pitched cackle. "Shoo, little boy, shoo!" flapping his hands at me as if he were chasing chickens from a garden.

It was pointless to ask this senile caretaker any more.

I bit into the apple as I left. It was hard and sour.

At a farm halfway down the mountain, a man with an empty sleeve and a limp, and about the age my older brothers would have been had they survived the war, greeted me at the pasture gate. He gave me a cup of fresh milk from the bucket he carried.

He told me he was taking milk by horse and wagon to a village at the foot of the mountain, and offered me a ride. On the way I asked him who owned the *schloss*, and made note of the name and address in Munich.

In the village, called Siebenschlaf, the farmer arranged for me to ride to Berchtesgaden with a friend delivering cheeses to hotels there. I was back in Bavaria. Indeed, had I been on the opposite side of the mountain that morning I would have been able to see, across the valley, the site of Berghof.

"Like a landscape from the Moon," the driver said, following my gaze to the pine forest that hid the view of what had been Hitler's chalet. "Only the stonework and a charred window frame around the view of Untersberg left after the bombs."

"Yet I heard it was a fortress," I said.

"Oh, yes. Steel and concrete, above and below, bunkers connected by kilometers of tunnels, they say. *Der Führer* might still be with us, had he retreated there instead of leading the defense of Berlin. I have heard rumors," he went on, looking at me sideways, "that he might even have done so."

"Do you believe such rumors?" I asked.

"I believe in selling butter to the Americans," he said.

FROM BERCHTESGADEN I hitched a ride with some American soldiers driving back to Munich.

My father was waiting for me.

He had discovered my lack of application in my studies. "The last of my sons," he said bitterly, "who can do even so little for his father."

He had also sold the house.

He slapped money down on the table, enough to keep me for a month. When that was gone, he washed his hands of me.

I breathed a sigh of relief that it was only the neglect of my studies and not my smuggling that he had discovered. I used some of the money to go out and get drunk.

The full impact of my situation hit me the next morning. Sober enough now to turn out my pockets and count my coins, I discov-

ered the scrap of paper on which I had written down the name and address of the owner of the mountainside *schloss*.

I carefully composed a letter, typed it, and mailed it.

Two days later, the post brought an envelope sealed with the coat of arms on the castle gate.

The afternoon of the next day, I was knocking on the door of *der alt Graf*.

HE LIVED OFF THE TAL, BEYOND PETERSKIRCHE.

The house was old even for that part of Munich. I was admitted by an old woman who led me up stairs of wonderfully carved oak. At the end of a hall lined with oil paintings in gilt frames, so dust-begrimed I could only guess at their subjects, she opened a heavy oak door, announced my name, and closed the door behind me.

Behind a broad marble-topped desk, my letter open before him, sat the same old man, wearing the same stained suit, who had shooed me from the courtyard of the castle.

"So," he said, without asking me to be seated. This time he spoke in sharp-edged High German. "You have ambitions as a hotelier."

"I should prefer to discuss that with the *Graf*," I said coldly.

"My dear child," he grinned at me, "I *am* the *Graf*."

HE PICKED UP MY LETTER AND PROCEEDED TO GO OVER IT, ALOUD, point by point. He seemed to find it hilarious.

"Is the marble of my courtyard so badly cracked," he said, "that it must be mended, like the streets of Berchtesgaden, with the chewing gum of American tourists?"

I turned to go.

"Stay, don't be hasty."

I turned back.

"Well." He folded the letter. "You have youth and health: no small assets. You appear to have a little talent for organization. You," tapping the letter, "can even type. You need paid employment and a place to stay. I need a secretary. Shall we strike a bargain?"

The wages he named were ridiculously low, but lodging and meals were included. And once in his household I might yet have a chance to persuade him of the value of my proposal, and to show my father that I was indeed his son.

It never occurred to me, then, to wonder how he knew my situation; my letter had been carefully worded to conceal it.

I MOVED INTO THE *GRAF*'S HOUSE THE NEXT DAY.

The house was palatial and the furnishings, had they been cared for, would have been worth a fortune, or so I was told by a friend from university, whose family dealt in antiques. He liked to show off his knowledge, and when he dropped in for a gossip he would often give me an informal appraisal of this or that.

The corridors were pervaded with a foul odor, as none of the toilets worked properly, and buckets of water were kept beside them for sanitary purposes. The kitchen sink was plugged and the electric stove only half functional. The heating system was completely broken down, as I discovered that winter.

In my spare time, I employed the handyman skills I'd learned working for my father to unplug the sink, fix the stove, and so forth. Unfortunately I could do nothing about the toilets, and the *Graf* wouldn't let me even look at the heating system. He said that North American heating systems were bad for one's health.

The old woman—her name was Hannah—was the only servant, and this probably accounted for the condition of much of the house, since the *Graf* refused to pay for outside help, despite her arthritis. I once asked her why she put up with the *Graf*'s disregard.

"Where would I go?" she shrugged. "Besides, he was not always so. Oh, you may smile, but do you think he was always old? When I first came to work for his mother, before the first war, he was a handsome young man, so kind and well spoken. When he laughed then, it was a lovely laugh, not like now...." She broke off and went back to scraping vegetables, and I returned to my own work.

The *Graf*'s correspondence was from all over the world and in many languages. I had some English, but the rest I could sort only by the name of the correspondent, and type the replies from the *Graf*'s crabbed handwriting with no more comprehension than if I were copying the inscriptions on the Rosetta Stone.

In sorting and filing his papers, I discovered that the *Graf* owned, or had owned, a great many properties in Germany and Austria. Some had been destroyed in the bombings, and others were inaccessible, being in Eastern Germany. Of the remaining, those in which the tenants were responsible for the upkeep were still reasonably profitable; in others, he was losing tenants through simple lack of maintenance. He raised money, when he needed it, through additional mortgages.

I also sorted and catalogued his collections: paintings, prints, coins, ancient books in Greek, Latin, and even Hebrew. His collection of religious objects included not only crucifixes and sculptures of saints and apostles, but menorahs, elaborate marriage rings, and other Jewish artifacts.

His titles were as extensive as his collections. Some were hereditary, others conferred on him from the Vatican (he was a Roman Catholic); others, as far as I could tell from the papers I sorted and filed, were purchased. He was connected not only to the Wittelsbachs, but to the Guermantes and also the Habsburgs, and was, in fact, cousin to the Crown Prince of the Austrian Imperial family killed at Sarajevo.

THE *GRAF* OFTEN TOOK his meals out, and I accompanied him. Despite his shabby appearance he was always shown to the best table and waited on promptly, as he tipped very well.

We dined one evening with a Baron and his wife who were also of a collateral branch of the Habsburgs. This Baron and Baroness had, like the *Graf*, been wealthy before the war. After the war, with the help of American investment, they had turned their former palace into an exclusive hotel in which British and Americans paid enormous amounts for the privilege of sleeping where crowned heads had slept.

"My secretary," the *Graf* began, giving the word the ironic twist which his friends seemed to find amusing although I didn't understand why at the time. "My secretary once had the audacity to approach me with just such an idea for the family *schloss* this side of the Austrian border." He then laughed inordinately, as he had when he'd read my proposal back to me.

"I urge you to take his advice," the Baroness replied. "The location! Ski slopes! A riding stable! And that wonderful ballroom—I remember my mother talking of the delightful times she enjoyed as a guest of your grandmother. Such a lovely woman, your grandmother, despite her unfortunate, ah, antecedents. This was before the first war, of course," she added in an aside to me.

"And of course," she went on, "there's the Seven Sleepers. Americans *love* that sort of thing. You could have charming little booklets printed for sale. 'Siebenschlaf, the Paladins of—'"

"The saints," the *Graf* interrupted. "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus who went into the cave on Mount Celion to escape persecution by the Emperor Decius, fell asleep, and woke centuries later to prove the doctrine of resurrection. You have heard of it, perhaps?" he went on to me.

"Well," I said, "I was raised an agnostic and so know little of Roman doctrine, but Ephesus is in Greece, is it not?"

"He's teasing you," said the Baroness. "But surely you know that Siebenschlaf and its castle are on the far slope of Untersberg, under which Charlemagne and six of his Paladins—"

"Five," the *Graf* interrupted her again, but she ignored him.

"—sleep until they are called forth to protect Germany in her hour of need."

"I have heard some such story," I said. "But it was of Barbarossa, under the Kyffhaüser in Thuringia."

"I'm pleased to see your geography education was not entirely neglected, despite the war," the *Graf* said sourly. "As for agnosticism, oh no, my young friend, you have a god, and you may even believe in his resurrection."

"I don't know what you mean," I lied.

"Come, come," he said, patting my shoulder, a familiar gesture that always made me feel uncomfortable. "You're among friends here, and you aren't the only *Hitler-Jungend* to survive the war."

"That is past," I said. "The Americans are the way of the future, and if they are willing to pay good dollars for the privilege of pretending to live in the distant past, why should we not benefit? As one of our Bavarian farmers said to me, 'I believe in selling butter to the Americans.'"

"By all that's holy," the *Graf* cackled, "new gods for old!"

"I don't see what you find so funny," I told him later, as he chortled into his snifter of the brandy he measured out for us at the end of each day. "Butter or the past, what's the difference as long as Americans are willing to pay for it? The Baroness speaks from experience. And the story of the Seven Sleepers—"

"The Baroness is a fool. As are you. Go to bed, you've had too much to drink."

But I remembered the Baroness's comment on the *Graf*'s grandmother, and I was not too drunk to go through some baptismal certificates I had found among his papers before I slept that night.

THE NEXT DAY MY FRIEND FROM UNIVERSITY, THE SON OF THE ANTIQUE dealer, stopped by to keep me company while I worked on the *Graf*'s silver collection.

"I thought you'd be in Salzburg today," he said.

"Why?" as I wiped streaks of silver cream from the communion chalice that half an hour ago might have been mistaken for iron, it had been so black with tarnish.

"Your cousin's wedding, of course."

"What?"

"You didn't know? Perhaps delicacy prevented his inviting you. I understand you used to be, uh, close to the bride."

I had avoided contact with both my cousin and my girlfriend since the incident on the Yugoslav border, not wanting to implicate them. Perhaps they had thought that I.... But married? So soon?

My friend wandered to the cabinet in which I had arranged items already cleaned and catalogued. "If your *Graf* ever needs money, my father would be happy to deal with him. Tell him we know how to be discreet."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, well." He picked up a large silver menorah, hefted its weight in one hand, caressed its curves with the other. "Burning a synagogue is one thing; leaving valuable items to be destroyed with it.... But what seemed practical at the time could lead to criminal charges these days. And that would be unprofitable for all concerned."

He replaced the menorah and strolled about the room, picking up and putting down items, and finally came to some boards leaning against the wall. Old paneling, I had assumed.

He pulled boards away to reveal that the item closest to the wall was not paneling, but a carved altar front, a triptych of nativity, crucifixion, and resurrection.

"You know," he commented, fingering the carved surface, "a number of items known to have entered Germany after entering Poland still haven't been located. Of course the situation in Poland these days simplifies that a little." He pulled one of his father's business cards from his pocket and dropped it on the table. "I could talk my father into a commission for you."

I, OF COURSE, MADE NO COMMITMENT, BUT HIS COMMENTS PROVIDED food for thought, rather too easily digested. I tried what I had considered the oblique approach of my friend on the *Graf*.

He countered, as usual, with laughter.

"By God, you're trying to blackmail me!"

He reached for that morning's correspondence and withdrew two letters, both in Polish, one from Montreal and the other from New York.

"Paper and pen, and take down replies to these. First, to M. Kubinski, 12 rue—"

"You know I have neither shorthand nor Polish," I said.

"Oh, I'll go slowly. You will understand. And German will do for both. Unless you prefer English? Practice in English is always good for those who want to deal with Americans. German? Very well. Herr Kubinski. The altar of the Church of St. Stanislaw, *circa*. 1450, which came into my safekeeping after the destruction of both the church and the village of that name in 1939, will be shipped from Bremerhaven...." he consulted a calendar and gave me a date. "The paperwork is in order, and copies will accompany the shipment. My agents have assured me that its installation in the New Church of St. Stanislaw in Montreal...."

And so on, grinning across that big desk at me the whole time as I scribbled away madly. The second letter, to a Rabbi Rubinek in New York, regarding the pair of menorahs, was in a similar vein.

The documents cited left no doubt of the legitimacy of the *Graf*'s participation in the transfer.

He signed and sealed the letters in my presence, and sent me out to post them immediately, despite the late hour. "We will go to supper when you return," he called after me.

THE PLACE HE CHOSE to dine that night was new to me, a coffee house in a cellar of a building only recently rebuilt. The only attempts to disguise the damage left by the bombs were concrete patches among the stones and brick of the foundation, and abstract paintings hung along the walls. I was unable to conceal my distaste for most of the paintings, and this amused the *Graf*.

"Don't be too loudly critical," he whispered. "The one above our table was painted by our waiter."

Black sweaters seemed to be the usual attire of both waiters and customers, and of the young men who moved about the shadowy cellar, pausing now and then at tables to chat.

The *Graf*, when we had finished our meal, hailed one of these young men.

"My dear Peter, allow me to offer you a cup of coffee." The *Graf* signaled for a pot and three cups, and poured coffee with the prim exactness of a British matron presiding over a tea table, then took a cigarette from his case. Peter pulled up a chair to our table, watching me, and the *Graf* watched Peter watching me.

"Just my secretary, *liebchen*," the *Graf* said with some amusement. He lit the cigarette, smiling over it at my suddenly hot face. Only now had I realized that the clientele of this coffee house was exclusively male. "It's all right, I have no need of wolfsbane, he likes silver too well."

"I was never one of those," I said sullenly, angry and confused at his apparent knowledge of my brief flirtation with the Werewolves, the underground Nazi movement in the post-war years. My father had extricated me from that; I had not been grateful at the time.

"Really, Peterchen, this one only does it for American dollars, and he insists on a condom." Peter smiled briefly. "He never fell so low as his girlfriend," the *Graf* went on. "She used to do it for American stockings, and then she betrayed him to the Yugoslav border police because she was afraid he'd find out she'd been sleeping with his cousin. Oh no, sit down!"

This last to me, for I had pushed back my chair, determined to extricate myself from further embarrassment.

"Sit down!"

And the thought of cold streets, no income, and no place to turn forced me back into my chair.

"Are you," I said to Peter in a weak attempt to turn the conversation, "are you also an artist?"

"Oh no," the *Graf* answered for him. "Peter's the canvas."

Cigarette in one hand, he reached out with the other to unbutton Peter's shirt. Peter sat still, like a rag doll propped up for a child to play with. The *Graf* pulled the shirt up from Peter's waistband, undid the last buttons, and flipped the shirt open. The whole of the young man's chest, from above his nipples to well down below his navel, was covered with small, round, burn marks, some of them old scars, some new and red, others fresh burns, blistered or crusting over.

Peter smiled at me.

The *Graf* reached over and placed the burning end of his cigarette against Peter's skin, just above where his pants fastened. I could smell the singed hair caught under it. Peter drew in his breath sharply but continued to smile. When the *Graf* withdrew the cigarette, now extinguished, Peter reached for the box of matches, struck one, and relit the cigarette the *Graf* held out to him.

The *Graf* inhaled as Peter rebuttoned his shirt, then handed the remains of the cigarette to Peter who rose, nodded, and strolled away smoking it.

The *Graf* stood. "Come. We'll walk home. You look as if you need the fresh air."

I SLEPT ILL, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, AND WAS UP EARLY, WRITING YET another letter.

I had managed to save a little, and I hoped my friend from university would give me a place to sleep for at least a few days.

I put the letter in an envelope, packed my few personal belongings, carried the suitcase down to the empty hall, then went back upstairs to leave my letter of resignation on the *Graf*'s desk.

The *Graf* was already up.

"I have telephoned for the car," he said. "You will be driving. We'll go to the *schloss*, spend a few days there, and then we can discuss whether or not there is anything to your ideas. You're all packed, aren't you?"

He must have seen the envelope in my hand, must have known what was in it, and that my suitcase was by the door downstairs.

The same way he knew that I would shove the envelope into my pocket and follow him down to the car, where Hannah waited.

"DON'T BE SULLEN, DEAR BOY," THE *GRAF* CHIDED ME AS I FOUND MY way out of the city. "It's a lovely day."

But I wasn't sullen, not by that time. Here was the opportunity I had been waiting for, and I was not about to pass it up.

And, once out in the countryside, it wasn't that difficult to put aside my memory of the night before. After a winter cooped up in that old house in Munich, the spring colors seemed twice as bright. Late April sunshine gilded a green world under a blue sky. Lambs frisked in pastures bright as enamel; birds sang in the hedgerows.

"It was lucky the *schloss* wasn't bombed at the end of the war," I ventured.

"Being so close to Berghof?" the *Graf* asked slyly.

"I believe the rationale was that castles were potential fortifications," I said mildly.

"Indeed. Like Berghof. Also storage places for art treasures and historic artifacts. They needn't have worried about this one in either case. Oh, it contained treasures enough half a century ago. I remember, as a child...."

The *Graf* fell into reminiscences then: about his childhood at the *schloss*, his student days at Heidelberg (he proudly pointed out a dueling scar across his left cheek), his youth wandering through the great cities of Europe before the first war. The sour, haughty aristocrat vanished temporarily and the miles spun away under the spell of his stories.

We stopped for lunch in Berchtesgaden, at a small tavern the American soldiers had not yet discovered.

After, we proceeded on less-used roads that wound back on themselves to accommodate the slopes of the mountains. The *Graf* pointed out the Eagle's Nest, now the site of a restaurant. I pretended to be concentrating on the road.

The Sun was setting as we emerged from the avenue of beeches. In the pink glow I could almost see the luxurious automobiles and carriages, hear the laughter and music from the ballroom which, the *Graf* had told me, extended the whole length of the front wing. Then the Sun went down and it was only shadows and shuttered windows.

I helped Hannah carry things to a small kitchen in the north wing, and she showed me to a room in the same wing, and found me sheets that were only a little musty.

I WOKE AT SUNRISE the next morning and descended to the courtyard. The apple tree which had yielded me a single sour apple the fall before was now sweet with fragrant bloom, and a haze of green at the base of old brown stems spoke of new growth in the weeds among the flagstones.

The Sun was just at an angle to penetrate the deep, arched entry on the west side of the quadrangle and pick out the friezes carved on either side, bringing the figures into dramatic relief, outlined in gold and shadows. Three figures on one side, four facing them from the other.

The central figure of the trio was taller than the others, with a round head, long nose, and slight pot belly under his robe. His thick hair stood out on either side of his head, under a crown. Charlemagne himself, I supposed, and the figures on either side, one of which wore a robe, the other armor, would be two of the Paladins. The four figures opposite were all in armor. One of these also wore a crown, less conspicuous than Charlemagne's. Seven heroes. Something niggled at the corner of my mind, something about....

"You will notice his height is seven times that of the length of his feet," the *Graf* spoke behind me, and I jumped. "Ninth century," he went on. "The stonework."

"And Charlemagne died at the beginning of the ninth century," I said thoughtfully.

"Congratulations. You know a little history as well as geography."

"So," ignoring his jibe, but trying not to display my excitement, "there could be some historical basis for—"

"You mustn't confuse the historical Charlemagne with the legendary one, my boy," he said. "The historical Charlemagne deposed Duke Tasillo of Bavaria. But the legendary Charlemagne took the Bavarian Duke Namo," touching the crowned figure opposite, "as his most trusted adviser."

"Will we go through the old castle today?"

"So you can see if the Paladins really sleep there? Untersberg is large; this castle small. Why should the sleepers be at this exact spot? To attract your tourists?"

"What is wrong with that? In England, so I understand, tourists flock to any place connected with Arthur, who is also supposed to be sleeping until England's hour of need."

"As Knez Lazar sleeps under Kosowa until the Serbs' hour of need, and Elijah will wake for the Jews. As Germany awaits the second coming of Adolf Hitler," with a more than usually sour laugh. "Your *Führer*, you know, often contemplated the view of the opposite slope of Untersberg and thought of Charlemagne, and he was pleased to refer to his own inner circle as his Paladins.

"And you, my boy, admit it, you still hope in your heart of hearts that your *Führer* sleeps, perhaps under Berlin, perhaps under

"You still hope in your heart of hearts that your *Führer* sleeps, perhaps under Berlin ..."

Berghof. What, haven't you heard?" the *Graf* mocked my silence. "He's a secret prisoner of the British! He's on a ranch in Argentina, an island in the Baltic! A cold sort of Avalon, eh? Or perhaps he leads a troop of Albanian bandits."

"Why should people be denied hope?" I said.

"My dear boy, think!" he sneered. "What country needs a hero to come and save it? A vanquished country!"

"Arthur is British, and the British are hardly a vanquished nation," I said, smiling. I was learning from the *Graf*; the man who smiles is the man in charge.

"Perhaps not yet. But the mountain under which Arthur is supposed to sleep is in Wales, and there will never again be a truly independent Welsh nation. Oh, come now," and he touched my shoulder in that familiar way I'd come to recognize since the episode with Peter. "Don't be downhearted. Who needs a *Führer* when you have youth and health?" He laughed as he felt me stiffen. "Could it feel that much different than a condom stuffed with American dollars?"

"I have no inclination toward that sort of thing," I said.

"Indeed. What were you thinking when I interrupted you?"

And I replied, without even having to try to remember, "The Baroness said six Paladins, and you answered, five. Yet here are six."

"But only five Paladins. The sixth," and his finger touched the robed man who stood next to Charlemagne, "was a magician."

"Will we go into the old part of the castle today?"

"No. It has not been used in nearly a century. When it was last entered, just before the war, it was found in serious disrepair."

"I would risk it."

"Perhaps we could bargain." He put his arm around my shoulder, and laughed again as I pulled away. "Come. Breakfast is ready, and we have a long day's work ahead of us."

After all, I thought as I followed him, I now know what he is. I am young, as he so often reminds me, and he is old and frail. Should he try anything, there will be no contest.

We spent the day going from room to room, and I made floor-plans of each wing. Pigeons had made free of the entry hall and grand ballroom. A colony of bats had claimed the supper room in a corner tower. The whole was heavy with the stench of guano. But the mosaic floors, paneled walls, and twin staircases that swept up from the entry to the ballroom were still magnificent, and beneath the filth, the structure was sound.

Some of the smaller suites and rooms were better protected, and many of them had valuable furniture still in place; perhaps the remote site had saved the *schloss* from vandalism. "Or perhaps the ghost of Charlemagne is on guard," I teased the *Graf*.

"I am not worried about Charlemagne's ghost," he replied.

On the second floor of the corner towers, where the new wings joined the old, were doors that I thought might lead to the old castle. It had occurred to me, that, as the English saying goes, the *Graf* protested too much about entering the old castle, and I surreptitiously tried both doors.

Or, to be more exact, I thought I was being surreptitious. Now that I thought I understood his weakness, I was inclined to forget his unnerving knowledge of me.

At any rate, both doors were locked, and the *Graf* held the keys.

THE *GRAF* DID NOT APPEAR AT BREAKFAST THE NEXT MORNING. Hannah told me he was indisposed but that I was free to continue whatever work I thought fit in any part of the *schloss* except the old castle. He had given her the keys to give to me.

None of them fit the doors in the corner towers.

I spent the morning retracing my steps of yesterday, adding, as best I could, existing plumbing and wiring to my diagrams. Plumbing, electricity, cleaning, repairs, and the new equipment necessary to a hotel would all be costly. I knew that from working with my father, but I would not gratify the *Graf* by telling him so. Besides, also thanks to my father, I knew who to consult about such things, and how to get them at a good price.

By afternoon I was free to explore the grounds around the castle.

On the north side, through a tangle of old fruit trees, I could see the leading of a stained glass window set deep in the wall of the end of the old castle.

I could almost feel the life seeping out of him, as air seeps gradually from a balloon.

On the south side, I found the stable the Baroness had mentioned, an extension of the old castle.

No trace of horses was left in the echoing box stalls. Not even the smell of hay remained in the loft above, where dust motes danced in the late afternoon sunshine slanting between the thick, hand-hewn boards of the loft walls. The ubiquitous pigeons fluttered along the rafters to escape through broken windows.

One corner of the loft had been enclosed as a room. Probably sleeping quarters for stable hands; two narrow wooden beds were built into the walls that divided the room from the hayloft, and the outside wall had been chinked and had a glazed window inset.

Set into the fourth wall, shared with the castle, was an old, cross-barred wooden door. After some tugging it scraped reluctantly across the floor with a screech of rusty hinges.

Stairs … But before I could cross the threshold Hannah called from the stable yard. I shoved the door shut and ran down.

"The *Graf* wants you to join him for supper."

"I'll have to wash up," I said, and started toward the courtyard, but she took my elbow to stop me.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I wish you had not brought him here," she said. "This place hurts him."

"But he brought me," I protested. "And he seemed well enough yesterday."

"It hurts him," she repeated. "Something happened here. Before the war."

"What?"

"I don't know. But he never came here again."

"He was here last fall."

"Oh no. He never left Munich in all of last year. He only came here because of you. Perhaps he will go back if you ask him."

"I'll try," I said, reluctantly.

I HAD ALWAYS THOUGHT of him as *der alt Graf*, but somehow, despite his years, I had never thought of him dying. Now I could almost feel the life seeping out of him, as air seeps gradually from a balloon. But even ill, even in my growing confidence, he was a formidable presence, and I dared not speak through supper. Still, I had told Hannah I would try, so at a look from her, when she brought coffee and brandy, I plucked up courage and said, "Sir."

He looked up from his brandy glass.

"Sir," I repeated. "You aren't well. We should go back to Munich tomorrow, where you can be seen by a doctor."

I expected anger and sarcasm at my presumption, but he said only, "You think so?"

"Perhaps even tonight," I said, genuinely worried by his seeming acquiescence.

"And what good would it do either of us," he said with a return of his usual sourness, "for you to fall asleep at the wheel?" He sipped his brandy and closed his eyes, as if by doing so he could rid himself of my presence.

I sat uncomfortably, my eyes on my coffee. I jumped when he spoke.

"Let me tell you a story." His eyes were wide open now, and he grinned a shadow of his old grin at me. "You'll indulge an old man, won't you?"

I set down my cup to indicate my attention.

"THIS HAPPENED IN VIENNA, BEFORE THE GREAT WAR. THE FIRST ONE.

"I was taking an evening stroll on the Ringstrasse before joining some friends for supper. At the corner of a park just off the Ringstrasse I encountered a young man selling postcards, hand-painted sketches of churches and other local monuments. The architectural rendering was nice enough, although the people were awkwardly drawn.

"He told me he painted these cards himself. I expressed surprise that he could make a living from this enterprise. He indicated to me that this was not his only line of business. He said he could get us a room at the Grand Hotel if I wished. All we had to do was say we wanted to see a room, and that if we had the key, we wouldn't need anyone to show us. That way we wouldn't have to pay for the room, but we would still have time to do anything I might want.

"I laughed at that. I was staying at the Grand Hotel, although I didn't tell him so; one has to be careful with this kind of person. But I found him strangely exciting, and, who knew? Perhaps his talents in other areas made up for his artistic mediocrity.

"So I said the bushes in the park would be more exciting for me, and he led me to a spot he knew, and handled me, hands and mouth, until I neared climax. Then he offered to pull down his pants and let me finish ... elsewhere.

"I paid him well. He went back to the corner with his postcards, and I went to join my friends.

"Now, why this sordid little reminiscence?" the *Graf* asked, apparently amused at the expression of disgust I couldn't hide.

I said nothing. The *Graf* sipped more brandy.

"But you already know where this is leading, don't you?" he went on. "Between the wars, I visited Frankfurt for a coin auction. At the hotel where I stayed, there was staying, as well, a delegation of the National Socialist Party, already coming into power in the country. I passed them in the lobby and, when I saw their leader, I decided to remove myself to another hotel. See this?"

He pulled out one of his cards and pointed to one of the string of titles printed on it, an Italian one. "I had to stay in Germany, to protect my interests. So this is the name under which I went from then to the end of the war. I didn't think he had seen me in Frankfurt, and I was pretty sure I hadn't let my name slip that time in Vienna. But why take chances? Why should my wealth end up in Nazi coffers and me up the chimney?"

"How could you be sure?" I asked when I finally found my voice. "It had been many years."

"You have seen his eyes. There was no mistaking his eyes."

Once again we fell into silence. My coffee had grown cold, my heart colder. I reached for my yet untouched brandy and took it in a single gulp, hoping the heat of the liquor would dispel that awful coldness.

The *Graf* grinned his old grin at me.

I pushed back my chair, spilling cold coffee and upsetting the brandy glass as I leaned over the table, trying to speak calmly.

"How dare you condemn *me* for what I was? You, the son of a branch of the Wittelsbachs, a homosexual, and grandson of a Jewess! Oh yes, I've seen her baptismal certificate, but baptism didn't change her blood. The Wittelsbachs went into exile rather than bow to the Nazis. Other homosexuals and Jews went up the chimneys. But you sat out the war practicing your perversions, protecting yourself with your Jewish grandmother's money. I was a child, and knew only what I was taught." My control had vanished; I was yelling now. "You were a man, and knew what you betrayed!"

"But, my dear boy," he smiled at me. "Some of us had to be alive when it was all over. Otherwise, who would there be to forgive you?"

His smile broadened to a grin, then to a laugh. The laugh degenerated quickly to a coughing fit, and he convulsed in his chair, unable to stop.

Hannah had come back into the room when she heard me shouting. She rushed to the *Graf* and massaged his back and chest, helped him to sips of water and brandy until the coughing subsided and he slumped in his chair, breathing harshly.

"He has agreed to go home tomorrow," I told her after we had helped him to bed. But her anger remained unabated.

I WITHDREW TO MY OWN BEDROOM, but could not sleep, as you may imagine.

One needs something in which to believe, and what had I to believe in now? Selling butter to the Americans?

You see, I did not dismiss the *Graf*'s story, although I wanted to, God knows how much.

Once again, a little patience, please, while I try to explain what I am still pondering nearly 50 years later.

The American propaganda flooding Germany after the war had not altered my allegiance. No vanquished nation loves its conquerors, even when justly defeated; especially so then, perhaps.

The *Führer* had been my god; the *Graf* knew that. How, I do not know, for I had never spoken of it to him, any more than I had told him of my financial straits at our first meeting. But know he did, and never lost an opportunity to twit me about it.

A lie, that was what the *Graf* had told me, a sneering lie, in repayment for my concern. And yet, and yet....

Sneer at me, tease me as he might, the *Graf* had never lied to me. However many times I told myself that he had, I always came back to the conviction that whatever else he did, he told the truth.

Over and over, across the years, I have examined my state of mind at that moment and found no answers.

Perhaps I wanted only to prove my autonomy by defying the *Graf*'s orders.

Perhaps it was only that I could not sleep, and so had to do something.

One last possibility: Perhaps the *Graf* cleverly manipulated me into doing exactly what he wanted.

No matter, now. I did what I did, and that is that.

I pulled on my clothes, found a flashlight, and quietly descended to the stable.

I HALFWAY EXPECTED TO HEAR GHOSTLY WHICKERS AND THE SOFT thud of hooves as horses shifted in their sleep. But the silence continued unbroken except for a brief flutter of pigeons as I climbed to the hayloft and found my way to the sleeping quarters and the door in the old wall.

I should have brought some oil. But there was no one to hear the screech of rusty hinges except the pigeons.

I turned the flashlight on the flight of stone stairs behind the door, took a deep breath, and began to climb, brushing away cobwebs as I went.

The flight was not long. At the top it opened onto a broad balcony overlooking what must once have been the great hall. Opposite me, below, was the other side of the doors where the morning before I had examined the stone portraits of the Paladins. Above, faint light marked the narrow, deep-set windows.

I moved cautiously across the balcony to descend a curving stair. The ceiling vaulted dark and empty above me. A dark patch at the north end indicated an archway leading to the tower room.

I crossed the floor as if trying to escape the sound of my own footsteps, uncannily loud on the stone floor. My flashlight shone on the

Each of the bodies had a bullet hole in the b

ribbed stone arches and carved oak benches of a chapel, the muted glow of old stained glass over the altar and, through another arch to the side, the stone effigy of a recumbent knight.

I had reached the effigy when I heard creaking and scraping. A familiar sound, I had heard it less than half an hour ago when I had pulled open the door in the stable. But this sound was heavier, more complaining.

Paleness intruded on the dark vastness of the great hall. The front doors were open.

I switched off my flashlight.

Silence, then the sudden beam of another flashlight searching across the floor, slow footsteps approaching the chapel.

I threw myself down between the knight's tomb and the wall.

The footsteps stopped at the door of the chapel, and the beam of light moved back and forth across the floor. Searching out my footsteps in the carpet of dust?

Now, there was no one who could have gained access to this part of the castle except the *Graf*, or perhaps Hannah. What would it have hurt for me to reveal myself to either one of them? But we are not always rational in the dark, or perhaps the dark has its own logic.

Behind me I could feel the hem of an old tapestry. I rolled over to hide myself behind it—and tumbled downstairs.

Fortunately, I held onto my flashlight and, shielding its beam with my hand, I examined my surroundings.

Stone and wood sarcophagi rested in alcoves on either side of me. Behind me, stone stairs led back up to the chapel. Ahead of me, a tunnel angled away.

Footsteps in the chapel. I ducked into the tunnel and switched off my light.

I could feel the change of air as the tapestry was pulled aside.

At the sound of footsteps on the stairs, all reason left me, and I turned on my flashlight and fled down the tunnel in utter panic.

GRADUALLY THE TUNNEL CURVED AND THE WALLS CHANGED FROM masonry to hewn rock. Suddenly, like moonrise, my flashlight's narrow beam was magnified by its reflection from the new surface of the walls.

The mountains in this area have been mined for salt for centuries, witness such names as Salzburg and Obersalzberg. I had stumbled into an old salt mine.

I slowed, listening for the footsteps behind me, but hearing nothing now.

The beam faltered; my batteries were low. But curiosity propelled me a few more steps into the salt cavern at the end of the tunnel.

I stopped cold. My flickering light shone on a heap in the middle of the low chamber.

Bodies, piled up as if they were cordwood. And the blood still flowed from them.

And that was all I saw before my light died completely.

I didn't dare give way to panic now.

I dropped to my knees and crawled, feeling in front of me, swinging wide to avoid touching those bodies. At last I reached a wall, stood, and began to feel my way along it, back to the tunnel that led to the chapel.

After what seemed an eternity I found the exit and, one hand against the wall, began to feel my way back.

The salt continued a long way and the curve in the tunnel seemed farther back than I remembered, but of course distances seem longer in the dark.

At last the texture of the wall changed, and I breathed a sigh of relief. Until I realized that the texture had changed at a corner, not a curve.

Feeling farther along the new wall confirmed my fears. This wall was a dead end. And it was not salt, nor hewn stone, nor masonry.

There had been another exit from the cavern with the bodies, and I had taken the wrong way out.

Now I wept with fear and frustration, and when I reached up to brush away the tears, salt that had rubbed off the walls onto my hands stung my eyes.

I took several deep breaths, and then began, slowly, to feel my way back the way I had come.

I had not gone far when I discerned a dim light in the distance. At first I thought my eyes played tricks on me. I closed them tightly, then blinked several times. The light remained.

I crept along the wall back toward the cavern, for I was now sure that was the source of the light. At the entrance, I flattened myself against the wall and looked around the corner.

"Come," the *Graf* said, without looking up from where he knelt beside the pile of bodies.

RELUCTANTLY, I approached.

"You killed them," I said.

"See Charlemagne himself," he said softly, stroking the thick, gray hair that still showed the imprint of where a crown had rested. "Dead over 20 years."

"These are newly dead," I said, "and killed by modern weapons." For each of them had a bullet hole in the back of the head and another over the heart, and the blood from the wounds was still red, although I could see now that it no longer flowed. "You must have killed them."

"I could say the same of you," he said, "and which of us would be believed? But you would not have known that the only way to kill such as these was by head and heart both." He gently touched the edges of each wound as he spoke. "Dead forever now. But let us not leave them like rats on a midden heap."

He unfastened the fine wool cloaks that each wore, colors still warm as life itself, royal purple, blue, scarlet, russet, white, loden, and took them and spread them side by side along one wall. Then he returned to the bodies and took one, not the one he called Charlemagne, but another old man, by the shoulders.

"Beloved countryman," he said, reverting to the Bavarian accent in which I had first heard him speak.

At last it dawned on me what he expected me to do. As I reluctantly took the feet, I found myself looking down on the arms of Bavaria richly embroidered on the old man's surcoat, red with his heart's blood.

"Duke Namo," said the *Graf* as we laid him on his cloak. The *Graf* closed the staring eyes, kissed them, smoothed white hair and beard, then pulled the edges of the cloak around to cover him.

We did the same for the rest, and the *Graf* named each as we did so.

"Charlemagne, Holy Roman Emperor. Roland of Britanny. Reynald, nephew to the Emperor. Brademante, the Emperor's niece, beautiful as the day and valiant as any man. Huon of Bordeaux."

He closed their eyes and smoothed their hair and beards, tucked back stray locks, still bright gold, that had escaped Brademante's braids, and covered their bloody chests and unhappy faces. Then he knelt a long time with his head bowed.

"But who ..." I said at last. I had to clear my throat and start again. "Who killed them? And you said they were seven. Here are only six."

"Seven," he corrected. "Bring me my cloak. I am cold."

Looking back to where the bodies had been heaped, I saw there was one last cloak of black wool, embroidered with astrological and cabbalistic signs in gold and silver.

ack of the head and another over the heart ...

I brought it and wrapped it about him where he knelt. He indicated I should sit beside him, and I knelt facing the covered bodies, lit from below and shadowed blackly on the white wall by the flashlight that lay on the floor.

"Let me tell you a story," said the *Graf*.

"ONCE THERE WAS A POWERFUL MAGICIAN, THE TRUSTED ADVISER OF the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne, and his name was Malgigue.

"The last part of his name might have come from the French, meaning dance, or from the Greek, meaning giant. But there is only one meaning for the first part of his name, and that is evil. Over the past two decades I have often pondered the meaning of that name. But in the time of Charlemagne the magician thought little on his name, for he was young, as magicians go, and he delighted in his knowledge, powers, and accomplishments, and the respect of great people these things brought him.

"When the Emperor and his Paladins retired to their seats below Untersberg to await the hour of Europe's need, Malgigue was one of these elect. His chair and his cloak were set for him at the table around which the Emperor and his Paladins slept.

"But sleep was not for him. He was to stay awake through the ages, reincarnating as need be, his powers passed through his semen to his eldest son into whom, when he died, his spirit moved.

"To stay too long in the world can be a dangerous thing. A magician is not God. Old pleasures pall, and new pleasures are sought in darker and darker corners. But for 12 generations, despite temptations to which he was more and more inclined to yield, Malgigue remained faithful to his God and his Emperor. Whatever pleasures he took, he hurt no person except in defense, caused no animal pain nor took its life except for food or protection.

"Then, in his 13th incarnation, he happened one night to be strolling on the Ringstrasse in Vienna. Here he encountered a painter of picture postcards and accepted his services as a male prostitute. A harmless enough pleasure, perhaps even a charitable one, as to all appearances the young artist was in dire need of the money he earned in his sideline.

"As the magician neared climax, the painter offered to pull down his pants and let the magician finish there. But the magician was quite excited by now, not just by the nearness of orgasm, but by a new and sudden urge: to humiliate. You may think that what the painter had suggested would be humiliating enough, and indeed, the magician had been about to demand it. But since it was *he* who had suggested it: 'Oh, no, little Jew,' the magician said, for he knew he could use no more devastating epithet on this person. 'Oh no, little Jew. You'll use your mouth and you'll like it.' And I grabbed his head and forced him down. 'Your teeth?' I laughed. 'Don't dream of it; I can repay that in ways you can't even begin to imagine.' He struggled and choked, but smiled a most conciliatory smile as I fastened my pants and paid him.

"The immediate pleasure behind me, I felt only shame. But I joined my friends for supper and tried to forget about it.

"If the magician noted any effects from this encounter, it was that his physical pleasures took on a crueler edge as years went by. Nonetheless, he married, loved his wife dearly and treated her tenderly, and rejoiced in the approaching birth of his first son, heir in power and spirit as well as property.

"His wife died in childbirth, and the baby with her, an event unknown in all his marriages across the centuries.

"Unwilling to marry again, he seduced a family servant. She had borne other, healthy children to her husband. To the magician, she bore only a miscarried fetus.

"And then one day, between the wars, he saw the postcard painter, now grown great in evil.

"He hurried to the mountain beneath which his Emperor and companions waited, for now, surely, was Europe's hour of need.

"The sleepers were seated around the table, swords at their sides, armor stacked in readiness. But they no longer slept. Each had been shot in the head and the heart.

"He knew then that the evening in Vienna had been no chance meeting.

"I fled in terror, and after that visited the castle only in dreams. And in one of those dreams came a foolish young man, greedy for adventure and the good things in life, no better and no worse than any other young man. Was it an omen? If so, my power was no longer sufficient to read it. I could only guess that he had been sent to bring me back here."

THE *GRAF* fell silent.

"Come," I said finally, rising, stooping for the flashlight. "We'll return to Munich when it's daylight."

I took his arm and helped him to his feet, and he clung to me, holding me back.

"I am not yet entirely powerless," he said. "My dear boy, I know your inclinations are not mine, that you have a horror of them, born of the fear—don't deny it—that you are secretly what I am. Wait," clinging more tightly as he felt me involuntarily pull away from him, "I assure you, you are not. But it may not be too late to pass on those few remnants remaining to me, and with that most valuable treasure, youth and health—"

I tore myself away from him and ran.

Behind me, in the dark, he cried out. I slowed. His second cry, of fear and pain, brought me to my senses. Leaving an old man, whatever his faults, to die alone in that room of horrors, an old man who had given me a home in my foolish need ...

He lay on the floor, clutching his chest. His legs twitched convulsively.

He was so old, so frail. So light in my arms when I picked him up.

He relaxed then, his head against my shoulder, and I scarcely felt his weight as I carried him back through the passage and past the coffins of his ancestors.

Dawn was breaking as I carried him into the chapel; red and gold and blue light seeped through the dirt on the stained glass resurrection of Christ.

I laid him carefully on an oak pew just below the altar and straightened his limbs. He was still and cold, and I was afraid that he was dead.

But then he opened his eyes. His lips moved, but his voice, if voice there was, could not be heard.

He beckoned weakly with one hand, and I leaned closer.

He reached up then, so quickly and unexpectedly that I had no opportunity to pull back. He pulled my face down to his and pressed his lips against mine, probing with his tongue until my mouth was forced open to receive his saliva.

The revulsion—it was there, on my part, but also something else, I could not say what, something that came from both of us. I have sometimes wondered if it was love.

Something burst behind my eyes, a painful light, there and gone like a brief migraine. His embrace loosened and he fell back even as I pulled away from him. I saw the erection subside beneath the cloth of his trousers, and when I felt for a pulse, there was none.

I went to look for Hannah.

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The Road to Caldarei

BY M. SHAYNE BELL

Illustration by Don Maitz



The road forked. The knight reined in his horse. "No waypost," he muttered. He looked at the clouds threatening more rain, then back at the roads. Neither road had seen much use. Both were covered with red leaves and choked with grass. One wound down the mountain to the desert. The other led up through a narrow cleft in the rock. The knight climbed from his horse and tramped the wet brush at roadside but found no waypost knocked down, grown over.

"Sir knight!"

The knight looked up. On the road leading through the narrow cleft stood an old woman dressed in black, her head covered with a black shawl. She lifted a bunch of grapes from her basket. "Will ye give an old woman a midday drink to help her on her way? I'll let go these grapes for it."

The knight ran to the woman. "Which road leads to Minora?"

"I asked for a—"

"Which is the Minoran road?"

You know that "wherever you go, there you are." So you'd better hope that where you're going is where you want to be.



The old woman set down her basket and stared up at the knight. "My throat is too dry to speak of roads."

The knight hurried to his horse, jerked a flask from his packsaddle, and threw the flask to the woman. She caught it, pulled out the cork, and took one quick, greedy swallow.

"Water!" she gasped. She spat three times onto the road and dropped the flask. "I asked for a drink."

The knight scooped up his flask and shook it in the woman's face. "I'm a messenger of the king!"

"Your king has grown poor to send you out with nothing but water."

"I vowed to drink water till I deliver my message and bring back the answer. I gave you what I had."

The woman pulled a bunch of grapes from her basket. "Then let me give you what I have."

"I don't want grapes. Tell me which road to take to Minora."

"My grapes are good. Eat one."

The knight took the grapes and threw them in the basket. "Which road!"

The woman turned slowly and looked down the road that led to the desert. "That road might lead you to Minora," she said. "But then, all roads might lead you to Minora, eventually."

"Damned witch." The knight mounted his horse.

The old woman smiled. "This road," she said, pointing to the one not often used, "leads to Candarei."

"Candarei? I've never heard of it."

"I doubt that."

"The innkeeper who told me this road's the shortest to Minora said nothing of your Candarei."

"Do you often listen to fools?"

"As often as I listen to old women."

"Is that so? Did your fool of an innkeeper tell you this road forked?"

"No."

"Then, sir messenger, you have the habit of listening to great fools. You should listen instead to old women."

The knight sighed.

The woman bent down for her basket. "Those who know roads live in Candarei," she said, "not in noxious inns. And Candarei's taverns sell better things to drink than water. But then, what can an old woman know?"

She started up the road.

"How far is this Candarei?" the knight called.

The woman turned back. "Not far. Surely you remember the song."

The knight slowly smiled.

"You *have* heard of my city."

"I'd nearly forgotten my mother's nursery songs."

"You should not forget them. They might warn you or protect you. Someday you might find the truth behind them all."

The knight laughed. "So you named your jumble of hovels up that road after a song for babies?"

"If you take this road, messenger, you will not laugh when you see me again."

The knight held out his hand. "Give me your basket and climb on behind me. I'll ride to your Candarei for directions and deliver you there, if that is where you are going."

The woman drew back. "I can't ride with you. You would not eat my grapes. Go on without me."

The knight scowled, turned, spurred his horse up the grassy road.

"Remember the song," the woman called.

The knight rode on. He looked back once. The old woman stood watching him.

The knight followed the road through the rock and down a narrow canyon that eventually opened into the head of a valley where groves of peach trees interspersed with fields of ripening wheat fell away to a broad river. The knight felt it odd for peaches to have ripened before wheat, but he knew little of highland peaches; such a thing was possible—obviously possible, he thought.

Suddenly the Sun broke through the clouds. Ahead, across the river and almost hidden by a steep, forested hill, glittered white columns that could have been towers of only a major city.

The knight heard singing. He made himself look away from the towers. Not far down the road, three women walked singing toward him. They wore black skirts and white blouses, and they carried empty baskets.

He felt strangely saddened by their song.

Before the knight could ride to the women, they pushed through the long grass at roadside and began picking peaches from low branches of the nearer trees.

They kept singing. The knight recognized the slow, mournful melody as the same his mother had sung to him years before when she'd sung of Candarei. He reined in his horse and listened to the women sing the song's short refrain:

Some seek the road to Candarei,
They say, to Candarei.
Some find the road to Candarei—

The women stopped and looked at him.

"Good morning, ladies," the knight said.

"Good morning, sir," the oldest replied. One of them, the youngest, curtsied.

"What city do I see across this river?"

"Candarei," the oldest woman said. They began picking peaches again.

The knight looked across the river and saw nothing clearly now but forests and a few orchards. "Can you tell me if this road leads past Candarei to Minora?" he asked.

"We have work, sir!"

"I am a messenger of the king! I must find the Minoran road."

"What king?"

The knight paused. "Alfred, of course."

"Alfred does not rule here."

"What are you saying, woman? Alfred rules from the sea to the Minoran border."

The youngest looked at the knight. "But this is Candarei," she said in a sweet voice.

"Damn your Candarei. Can you or can you not direct me?"

The women laughed.

"Then good day."

"Wait!"

It was the youngest.

"What is your name?" she called.

"My name?"

"You must have one."

"Roger. Roger de Bourne."

"Take this, Sir Roger."

She tossed the knight a peach.

The knight caught it. The peach was plump and ripe. Rainwater sparkled on its skin.

The women stood watching him. "Eat it," one of them called.

He took a bite. It was the most delicious bite of peach he had ever eaten. The women laughed and started throwing peaches at him. One knocked the peach from his hand.

"Stop!" he shouted.

A peach hit his neck. Another hit the horse's rump. The horse galloped down the road.

"Damned women!" the knight shouted.

The eyes seemed black pits set back in

He stopped his horse and looked back. The women had disappeared into the orchard.

He could hear their singing.

Two hours later, the road forked. One branch led through orchards and wheat fields to the river. The other, covered with red leaves and choked with grass, led up through a narrow cleft in the valley wall ahead. An old woman dressed in black, her head covered with a black shawl, sat under a tree at the grassy fork. The knight rode up to the woman. "Good afternoon, madam," he said. "Do either of these roads lead to Minora?"

The woman reached into a basket at her side for a strawberry which she ate without looking up, without speaking.

"Does either road lead to Candarei?"

"Both do."

"Both! Which is the shorter?"

"Candarei is not far, whichever road you take."

"Oh, yes. The babies' song: 'Candarei's an easy ride.' I remember some of the lines."

"How much have you forgotten, Sir Roger?"

The knight stared. "You know my name."

The woman reached for another strawberry.

"I have never been here," the knight insisted. "How do you know me?"

The woman began to sing, very softly:

She knows the men who eat her fruit,
Who eat it on their way.
She knows the men who taste the fruit
Of changeling Candarei.

She looked up. The knight could not be sure because of shadows cast by the woman's shawl, but the eyes he saw seemed black pits set back in a fleshless, dirty skull.

He reached under his leather jerkin for his cross. "One bite of a peach was all I took."

"Will ye eat a strawberry?" the woman asked, lifting her basket.

The knight turned his horse and galloped back down the road he had just traveled. Late in the afternoon he stopped to feed his horse, careful to give it oats he had brought with him in his packsaddle. He himself ate only hard bread bought at the inn the night before, though plum trees thick with ripe plums stood all around him. He would not drink water from his flask until he had wiped the mouth of it again and again. He rode on through a light, cold mist.

His horse's were the only tracks in the muddy road. He followed them. The road never forked. Yet in the early evening when the road began to rise to the head of the valley where he had eaten the peach, the orchards were different. Pear trees grew as far up the valley as he could see. He saw no peach trees.

Women in the orchard were singing the song of Candarei:

Who eats the fruit of Candarei
Will crave it ever more.
Who eats the fruit of Candarei
Will need it ever more.

To Candarei, to Candarei,
Away to Candarei!

Some seek the road to Candarei,
They say, to Candarei.
Some find the road to Candarei—

The singing stopped. The knight reined in his horse. He saw three women dressed in black and white picking fruit not far from the road, the women he had met earlier.

"Sir Roger," the youngest called.

Her basket was filled with pears.

"Where are your peaches?" he cried.

"Peaches?" the oldest asked. "My sisters and I have picked pears all afternoon."

The knight pointed at the youngest. "You threw me a peach."

The women laughed. The youngest held up a pear. "Will ye eat a pear tonight?"

He wanted it; something inside him—not hunger—wanted that pear. He gripped his reins. "I'll eat none of your fruit." He spurred his horse up the road. When he looked back, he saw the women staring at him without smiling, without singing.

The knight followed the road up the narrow canyon, then down through the cleft in the rock. The road ended in a wheat field. It did not fork. No roads wound down the mountain to the desert or across the highlands to an inn. Snowbound mountains the knight had never seen boxed in the little valley of wheat. The only road out was the road back to Candarei.

An old woman dressed in black with a black shawl over her head worked bent over in the field, cutting sheaves of wheat with a large, curved sickle. She was singing, singing the song of Candarei, but she stopped and straightened stiffly when she heard the knight's approach. She did not look at him.

The knight stopped his horse close to her. The old woman took a whetstone from her dress pocket and began sharpening the sickle.

"You were singing a song," the knight said. He cleared his throat. "How does that song end?"

"You do not remember, Sir Roger?"

"No."

The woman turned to him but did not look up. She sang softly:

To Candarei, to Candarei,
Away to Candarei!

Some seek the road to Candarei,
They say, to Candarei.
Some find the road to Candarei—
They stay, in Candarei.

The old woman ran a finger along the gleaming edge of her sickle.

"Why?" the knight asked.

She handed him a peach with one bite taken from it. He threw it to the ground.

The woman laughed and rubbed her whetstone down the sickle's edge. The knight pulled the cross from under his jerkin and held it between him and the woman while he turned his horse. He let the cross hang down his back. He walked the horse up the road covered with red leaves and choked with grass.

He could go nowhere else.

The world he had known was changed, gone somehow, he did not know where. Only that he felt hungry, tired, and afraid made him believe he was still alive.

When he saw Candarei again, the Sun had set. The last false light of day illumined the valley. Groves of carefully tended apple trees—"Apple trees," the knight whispered; he pulled his cross back around and held onto it—groves of apple trees interspersed with fields of rye fell away to the river. Three women were walking down the road, baskets of red apples balanced on their heads. They were singing the song of Candarei. He could hear their sad melody but not their words. And across the river, behind the thickly forested hill, the knight caught the day's last light glinting off white towers he could not reach before the dark. ❧

a fleshless skull.

enchanted ground

Louis Smith first saw enchanted ground on his way to work. He would always wonder if he found it only because of the direction his life had taken—down into nothing: divorcing his second wife; becoming alienated from his kids; losing his brother in a motorcycle accident; being passed over for a promotion that probably meant he would have to change companies if he wanted to get ahead. It had all happened in the space of an overcast year that threatened rain, but delivered on nothing. He had been set adrift, a leaf spinning on the surface tension of a life.

It wasn't much to look at, his enchanted ground. Just a 15-by-15 patch of blasted earth between Ed's Hardware and the open patio of Not Just Another Coffee Shop. At first, he thought there must have been a fire that had burned to the ground a small building he had never noticed. Somehow without burning the buildings next door. Or even darkening their walls. While the ground itself had been scorched black with streaks of ashen gray. It didn't add up. Nothing grew on his enchanted

Sometimes the only way to see what's there is to look closely at what isn't.

BY DAVID SANDNER

Illustration by Michael Dubisch


DUBISCH
-2000

ground the whole time Louis knew the place. Later, he realized this was because the spot didn't really exist. There was nothing there so how could something grow on it? These realizations, backed by his guesses and suppositions, occupied Louis the rest of his life to his immense satisfaction.

But at first, the black spot of earth only confused him. He looked at it as he passed it on his way to work, and stared at it again as he headed home in the crowds of oblivious commuters. Nobody ever looked at it, but then why would they? He took to stopping in the coffee shop after work and drinking black coffee while sitting in the uncomfortable white metal chairs on the patio. If he could manage it, Louis would take a seat close to the burned patch and examine it carefully while pretending to be watching the people out front and waiting for his coffee to cool. Once he reached over and touched the earth, rubbing ash between his fingers. He noticed then—by the way his skin glowed when he reached over into the enchanted ground—that the lighting *there* didn't match the lighting on the street. It fell from a different sky, he reasoned. Faintly, an orange-tinged twilight lit up the enchanted ground, any time of day or, as he learned later, night. The light on his hand made him giggle, though he couldn't say why. He hadn't laughed in a long time, hadn't had any reason to laugh; and though he still didn't, the light made him feel happy. Later, much later, he guessed that it wasn't the ashen ground, or the light, but his own projections that governed his reactions, the things he brought with him and nothing more. But that was much later, after the place had disappeared.

The light made him feel happy. Later, he guessed that it wasn't governed his reactions, the things he brought with him and nothing

Louis first learned nothing was actually there from the owner of the coffee shop. After coming in every evening for two weeks, and on weekends too, the owner had taken to greeting him, making up his order before he ordered, and even bringing it out to him on the patio. He tried to ask his question nonchalantly between comments on the drizzly weather.

"What happened next door, a fire?" He motioned with his head.

"At Ed's?" The owner gave him a queer look. She had her brown hair tied back, a strand on her cheek. She wore wire-rimmed glasses and a blue bowling shirt that said "Tom."

"No, in the lot between there."

"What? There isn't enough space between our places to wedge in a dime."

"Oh." Louis nodded. "Right. I don't know what I was thinking about."

Or, what, he thought, I wasn't thinking about. Even then, that occurred to him. This was the place he wasn't thinking about, and couldn't think about. He believed *that*, sometimes, both when the place existed and after it had gone.

When the owner of the coffee shop had gone back inside, Louis got up and walked on to the enchanted ground, which sloped up to make a small mound of ash and earth. Aside from the light, nothing struck him as different *there*. He didn't feel giddy the way he did when he put his hand in. He began to experiment. He waved at the people passing by on their way home from work. None of them noticed him. He suspected he was the only one who could see this place, though he couldn't guess why right then. He yelled out to the people. He insulted them. And that seemed to be enough for one day, so he left with his hands in his pockets and rushed home to sleep on his secret. He dreamed about the place outside of time, a changeless dream of sitting in nothing, affected by nothing, bathed in the twilight of another sun in another sky.

He woke up and said, "The possibilities!" He laughed because he had said it aloud. "The possibilities," he said again, holding his arms out. He laughed again, for, he spoke to no one but himself.

He peered at the enchanted ground from the corner of his eyes as he walked to work. He thought of nothing else all day. After work, he walked over to the bare patch of ashen earth and jumped in, kicking up soot. His footsteps remained from the day before, but nothing else had changed. He shouted again at the people passing by. He felt he had to do something more, that the open possibilities of such a place demanded it. All he could think to do, though, was take off his clothes and stand naked before the throng of passersby. Naked, he compared himself to them and they seemed artificial, carefully staged effects of dress and manner. And the ways they wouldn't look at each other. He luxuriated in the long stares he could give to them and the play of the golden twilight over his pasty skin. It made him feel more real than they. That made him laugh again, though no one heard him.

He didn't go home that night, sleeping in the ash, leaving only briefly after midnight to get microwave food and buy candy from the drug store down the street (he had to put his clothes on again for that), and that's where he found the rubber balls. He bought two dozen.

He took to playing tricks, first throwing the rubber balls out to hit people, watching their comical surprise, then water balloons. Finally, in a moment of inspiration, peeing on a bearded patron at the coffee shop wearing a suit and a red power tie. The man swore and tried to cover his slicked-back hair as he ran inside to complain. Louis regretted that because he liked the owner of the coffee shop. He regretted all of his tricks then, but even more later, when he thought about them after everything was over and wondered, nebulously, about the lost possibilities he foolishly squandered.

"The possibilities!" he would tell himself, much later, standing in the shower, or looking up from his newspaper on the subway, "the possibilities!" And he would shake his head. But neither at the time nor later could he figure out what those possibilities might really be. But a place outside of time should have had them, he knew.

After the peeing incident, he stopped hanging out on the enchanted ground naked all the time. Wearing clothes somehow made him still part of the crowd, one of them, and so constrained to treat them civilly. Although he would occasionally masturbate before the rush-hour mob, laughing and making suggestive comments. Those moments magnified in time as well, until that seemed to him, later on, to be the main use he had made of the place and it shamed him, burning on his cheeks as he sat eating lunch or watching a movie. Mostly, though, he just sat in the ash with his arms around his knees calling to the people outside the enchanted ground, calling for them to come to him, please, but no one would ever hear. He couldn't say why he kept trying to call them when he knew it would never work, but he did. And strangely it made him feel better. He never could say why.

Louis felt thankful he wasn't masturbating when he met the little, stooped, balding man in the tweed coat who also had the second sight and saw the enchanted ground. One day the man turned from the crowd and stared at him, hard. The man hadn't seemed out of the ordinary until that moment. Louis hadn't even been calling out to people then. Startled, Louis said nothing. The man passed on, muttering, and Louis considered going home and never returning to his enchanted place. It had been discovered. But then he thought maybe the man would never return and he could keep his separate place. Maybe the man already had another place of his own. Louis stayed, and slept covered in ash. He awoke to the man clearing his

throat. The man stood outside on the sidewalk glaring at Louis. No one seemed to notice him, a fact Louis would ponder over later but hardly noticed at the time.

"Well," the man said.

Louis swallowed. His place, his fine and private place, *had* been discovered.

"What?"

"Invite me in. It's the only way. It's the rules of enchantment."

"What do you mean?"

"Let me in."

"Come in then," Louis said. As the man stepped in and looked about him, Louis felt another wave of shame at the poor use he had made of the place. Here, before him, stood someone who certainly must know the possibilities. The man's large head overshadowed his small and angular body. His thin, balding hair had been combed over the top of his scalp and he had a tightly trimmed mustache.

"Well, I suppose I'm here to warn you," the man said, his eyes never stopping surveying the ashy ground or glancing up at the twilight sky that wasn't there. The man took out a gold pocket watch from his pants pocket. "Some time tonight this place is going away. You had better leave."

"What?" Louis felt a hysterical feeling welling up inside, like he would scream. He clasped his hands together to keep them steady. But he thought, I can't lose this place, too. It came as compensation. I had earned it, paid for it in heartache and depression.

"What do you see?" the man asked. The man had turned his back to Louis, his body twitching uncomfortably, his head moving back and forth, examining.

"Where?"

"Here. Where else?"

"Ash. I see ash, and burned earth."

"Is that all?"

"Is there more?" What could the man see? What kind of sky did the light really fall from? The man looked up.

"What do you see above?"

"Nothing."

Louis felt emptied. His place was not his place. He saw only ash. His breathing came ragged as he felt he did not belong, here or anywhere. Not even here, in the place that had been his alone. Or perhaps, Louis thought, the man means to make me think he sees more than me; maybe he wants me to leave so he can have the place himself. Louis felt his cheeks flush, but with indignation.

"It's mine."

"It doesn't belong to you or anyone," the man said. But the man's back tightened. His shoulders hunched. Louis knew he had hit on something.

"What *is* this place?" Louis asked.

"Enchanted ground. It's an empty place around which everything else *is*. It isn't."

"But I see it."

"Well, that tells you something, doesn't it?"

"I can see it because my life is empty, right? Because I needed to see it?"

"Everyone thinks that way at first." The man shook his head. "It's just a place that doesn't exist, defining everything. See?"

"No."

"Anything, existence. Without this emptiness, how could it be?"

Louis shook his head. He would think about the words the man told him. But how can you think on emptiness without stumbling on something? The explanation never meant as much to him as the light on his body from an invisible sun, a light that had always been nothing. That's what he remembered best about the place later on, when he thought about it as he sat watching TV or cooking scrambled eggs, the gentle fall of twilight on his arms and naked body.

"How do you know all this?"

"I guessed it. I've been at this a lot longer than you."

"You've seen other places like this?"

"A dozen, maybe a bit more. I know where to look."

"You can't have this one."

"I don't want it." But the man half-turned his head to look at Louis from the corner of his eye.

"Why do you want this place?" Louis asked.

"I don't."

"You do."

"There's nothing here."

"I'm staying."

"Fine." The man stepped to the edge of the enchanted ground. "You've been warned. You should have left. You can't even see what's here. Fine."

The man stepped away and abruptly lost himself in the crowd. Louis would always wonder what the man had really wanted. But he would never be able to even make a satisfactory guess. It bothered him, later on, as he sat pondering over a crossword puzzle or walking alone down the street on a windy day. But in the moment, Louis sat on his ash heap and believed. He tried to look out of the sides of his eyes to see if he could see something more there. But he couldn't, and only made his eyes water. He didn't even know what to look for. Finally, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, he shivered in the cold. It was never too cold on his enchanted ground. He lay on the sidewalk before the coffee shop. His enchanted ground had vanished, and the two buildings had closed up tight to one another again. Louis walked home covered in ash. He had lost his left shoe *there*. He wondered if someone else from somewhere else had found it, and what they had made of it. He showered and slept on his bed for the first night in a week.

Louis had been fired, of course, after staying away from his job for so long. He didn't mind. He found a new job after a time, and without too much difficulty. A better job. He made friends. He remarried. He never forgot the enchanted ground. He never told anyone about it except his wife. She didn't believe him, but she didn't do anything more than shake her head at him and laugh. He thought about the enchanted ground often, guessing at what it was and what it meant. It defined him. He decided on that as an explanation after years of thought. He and the balding man had both been right. He had centered himself around its emptiness, the way the man had said everything else did. Why not him with the rest? He had seen it because he had lost sight of the emptiness that makes everything possible, or bearable, the space which defines by its impossibility everything that is possible. Perhaps that wasn't true, exactly, he sometimes thought, but it didn't matter, because he acted as if it were true and that was enough to believe in for his whole life. He sometimes looked for other enchanted spots but never saw them. He didn't know where to look like the balding man. Or maybe, he thought, I don't need them anymore. And perhaps the man did. He wished the man well.

Sometimes his wife would wake him up in the middle of the night.

"You were shouting about 'The possibilities! the possibilities!"

She laughed at him; they laughed together. He had never seen the possibilities and never would. She loved him for it. ❧

the ashen ground. or the light. but his own projections that more. But that was later. after the place has disappeared.



A TROLL STORY

Lessons in What Matters, No. 1

Illustration by Web Bryant

Ho, don't turn on the lamp; who I am is not important. The lamp wouldn't work, anyway. If you shout for your parents, they won't hear you. Are you afraid? There's no need, I'm here only to tell you a story. If you wish you may pretend I'm a figment of your imagination, product of a fever dream. Oh, yes, I know about your fever. Your mother thinks you're coming down with something, but it's not that, is it? It's guilt. You feel bad and there's no one to tell. Such a small thing, too, to punch a boy on the nose and make it bleed, and in a noble cause, for what else can a person do but step in when a bully is hurting the weak? Unexpected though, the sound of breaking bone, eh? That noise, that meaty creak, makes it all real. Tomorrow you'll pluck up the courage to tell your mother, and she will wipe away your tears and snot and tell you it doesn't matter, to forget it, that you did the right thing. Which is why I'm here. It does matter, you see, and nine is not too young to learn these things. Everything you do is a step toward who you will become. We are born in blank ignorance, a kind of

Wouldn't it be nice if a small voice came to us and told us to "Pay attention — this is important?" Maybe, maybe not ...

By Nicola Griffith

darkness, if you will, and every act, every thought is a little piece of knowledge that illuminates the world and leads us farther from the nothing of our beginning. We don't always like what we see but it is important that we look, otherwise the steps mean nothing, and we become lost.

I see your hand by the lamp switch once more. Very well, try it if you must. You see? I told you the truth. Everything I will tell you is true, at least in the ways that matter. There's no need to scrunch up in a heap like that, no reason to fear me. Perhaps the light bulb simply needs replacing.

But light can be such a comfort, can't it? There are some times and places, some circumstances which only make it more so. I am here to tell you about one such time and place. Listen carefully; it matters.

In Norway a thousand years ago, all dreaded *morketiden*, the murky time of winter when the Sun hides below the horizon for weeks on end and the very rock sometimes stirs to walk the steep *fjell* in troll form. Families lived in lonely seters, and in winter, trapped by snow and darkness, the only comfort was to lift a burning twig from the hearth and touch it to the twisted wool wick floating in a bowl of greasy tallow, to watch light flare yellow and uncertain, and to hope the wind that howled down the *fjell* would not blow it out, leaving nothing but long twisting shadow from the fire, whose coals were already dying to deepest black tinged with red.

In the Oppland lived one such family, a hard-working man called Tors and his strong-minded wife, Hjorda, and their sandy-haired daughters Kari and Lisbet, better off than most. They had a fat flock of sheep and fine cows for milk, their seter was large and well covered with living sod and surrounded by sturdy outbuildings, and in addition to their bond servants, they could afford a shepherd in winter, two hired men to tend the fields and mend the walls, and a dairymaid. At this time it was the end of summer and the livestock were fat, the grass green, and the storehouse full, but Tors and Hjorda were worried. Oh, it was not their daughters, who ran about the fields like little plump geese, not a care in the world. Nor was it the hired men or the dairymaid they both mooned after. No, it was that even as the nights began to draw in, Torsgaard did not have a winter shepherd.

Hjorda decided that Tors must go to the All-Meet, the Thing, that year. "For while it is not always true, more heads may on occasion lead to greater wisdom."

So Tors went to the Thing, and he and his neighbors from Gjendebu and Leine and other places as far away as Dragsvik talked of fields and sheep and the price of oats. On the last night they drank vast quantities of mead. "Last winter trolls came to walk the *fjell*," Tors said. "Our shepherd disappeared and no local man will be persuaded to watch the sheep this year." This was very bad, and no one had any advice to offer. Eventually, many horns of mead later, Grettir, a farmer from the richer lowlands of Leine, stroked his beard and said, "There is a man, a strange, rough man, Glam by name, who might watch your sheep. But I would not want him watching my sheep if I had daughters." Despite the mead, Tors was not a stupid man, and he agreed that it is better to lose one's sheep than one's daughters. Especially if you have a woman like Hjorda to deal with at home.

The next day, he woke up feeling as though his head were seven times too big for his hat and his legs three times too weak for his body and, to top it all, his horse was gone. None of his neighbors could spare him even a nag; he would have to walk the long, long path home. Mid-morning found him tramping the springy turf of a narrow valley between two hills. Autumn berries grew bright around him but the air was chill, and he worried about what Hjorda might say when he returned to Torsgaard not only without a shepherd, but without his horse. And then, crossing his path, was a man, a huge bundle of faggots on his back. If the bundle was huge, the man was more so.

"What is your name?" asked Tors in amazement, looking up at the massive brow, ox-like shoulders, and the muscles of his bare arms which were plump as new-born piglets, but white.

"They call me Glam." His voice was harsh, like the grinding together of granite millstones, and he tossed the bundle to the ground as though it weighed less than his hat—a greasy leather thing. His hair, too, was greasy, black and coarse as an old wolf's. The face under it was pale and slippery looking, like whey, and his eyes were a queer, wet, dark gray-green, like kelp.

"Well, Glam, I need your help." Tors had been about to ask for directions to a farm or settlement where he might buy a horse, but his head ached, and he felt out of sorts, and thought perhaps if he didn't tell Hjorda about Grettir's warning, all might be well. "Grettir tells me you might be persuaded to work for me at Torsgaard as my winter shepherd."

"I might, but I work to please myself and no one else, and I do not like to be crossed."

His harsh voice made Tors' head ache more. "Name your terms."

"Where is your last winter shepherd?"

"We are haunted by trolls. He was afraid." No need to mention the fact that he had disappeared on the *fjell*, where the trolls walked.

"A troll will provide me with amusement during the long winter nights."

THEY BARGAINED, AND GLAM AGREED TO start work on *haustblot*, the celebration that marks the first day of *morketiden*. As soon as they spat on their hands and shook, Glam slung his bundle up onto his back without even a grunt, and though his walk was shambling and crablike, it was fast, and he was gone behind a stand of aspens before Tors could think to ask about a nag. But scarcely was Glam out of sight when from behind the very same stand of aspens came trotting Tors' very own horse. Its eyes were white-ringed and it was sweating, but it seemed pleased to see Tors, and it was only later that he began to scratch his beard and wonder at the odd coincidence. So he went home a hero, with his horse and his promise of a winter shepherd, and waited for *morketiden*.

The people of Torsgaard and the surrounding farms went to the hov to celebrate *haustblot*: to welcome the winter season and implore Thor to protect them against disease, sorcery, and other dangers, and Frigg to ensure warmth and comfort and plenty in the home during the time of dark and bitter cold. With all the fine white beeswax candles lit, the strong light showed men in their best sealskin caps and women with dried flowers woven into their hair. All made merry, for soon the dark would come. Amid the singing and laughter and drinking came Glam.

He wore the same greasy hat and despite the cold his arms were still bare. All his possessions were bundled in a jerkin and slung over his back. He walked through the suddenly quiet people toward Tors, and Tors' two hired men stepped in front of the dairymaid, and Tors himself looked about for Hjorda and his girls, and people moved from Glam's path, from his queer gaze and hoarse, ill breath. Hjorda appeared from the crowd and stood at Tors' elbow. "Husband," she whispered, "tell me this is not our shepherd."

Glam stopped some distance from them and folded his arms. He shouted, so all could hear. "It is *morketiden* and I am come to look after Tors' sheep." A murmur went up in the hov, and Hjorda said privately, "Husband, look how the very candles sway from his presence. Send him away." But Tors did not want to be gainsaid before his neighbors, so he turned to Hjorda with a ghastly smile and said, "Hard times need hard remedies." Raising his voice he called to Glam, "Welcome to Torsgaard. Now our sheep will be safe." And it was done.

The rest of *haustblot* passed uneasily, with Glam tearing into a great ham and draining horn after horn of feast mead, and Tors telling people Glam would no doubt be on the *fjell* every day with the sheep, and manners after all were not everything.

And, indeed, the next morning Glam left with the sheep before Tors woke and did not come back until the evening fire was dying. And as the days passed, even Hjorda had to admit that Glam was a master of sheep herding: They seemed terrified of him, and all he

had to do was call out in that terrible hoarse voice and they huddled at his direction. Days turned to weeks, and he lost never a single sheep. But not a man or woman or child would go near him, except as they must when he called for meat and drink, and even the dogs slunk away when they heard his tread.

Many weeks passed in this fashion and the days drew in upon themselves and the nights spread until even noon became just a thin, pale dream of daytime and nothing seemed real but the cold, the howling wind, and the red flickers of firelight. And still Glam called for his sheep in the dark of every morning and led them up into the hills to find grass, and every night he came back in the dark, face white as clabbered milk despite the cold.

Midvintersblot was a day sacred to Frey, when all the people of Torsgaard gathered to beg Frey to ensure fruitfulness for people and animals and crops during the coming year. It is a day of fasting until the evening feast, when holiday mead is brought out and the plumpest hog roasted, and the people feast by torchlight all night and don't sleep until dawn. That *midvintersblot*, Glam rose as usual in the dark and called for bread and meat. The noise woke Kari, the eldest daughter. His shouting grew louder—no one seemed to be attending him—followed by a great thump as if he had sent a man flying with a casual blow with the back of his hand.

Kari rose from her bed. "Today is *midvintersblot*. We fast until the evening to honor the gods."

Glam sneered. "I have never seen a god and I have never seen a troll. And who are you to say whether I should eat or drink? Now go get my food!" And he stepped aside so Kari could see the bondservant lying senseless by the cold hearth. Kari, frightened, brought his food. When he stepped out into the dark, shouting in that horrible voice for his sheep, she went to her mother and spoke of what had happened.

Hjorda saw to the bondservant, then sought Tors and told him of events. "Glam must be paid off and turned out, husband."

"But what of the sheep, wife? Besides, the man was probably just hungry."

"The servant's cheek is broken, and he is only now recovering his wits. He would have done the same to Kari, had she not obeyed."

"Nonsense. No doubt the girl misunderstood, frightened by his loud voice." He turned back to the warmth of his wolfskin coverlet and slept. He didn't hear the rising note of the north wind, the first flurries of driving snow. He didn't hear Glam roaring above the wind for his sheep, the shouts getting fainter and fainter and farther off. By the time he rose, Glam could not be heard and the snow was settling in fat white folds on sills and stoops. The hours slipped by, with all the servants and the women of the house working over spits and ovens and Tors working over his tally sticks. The flurries became a blizzard and the dairymaid, when she went to milk the cows, could not see her hand before her face.

The scents from the kitchen grew more delicious, the wind climbed to a high-pitched howl. The trenchers were laid on the board, and still Glam did not return. The hired men and several male servants came to Hjorda. "It's cruel outside, but if you asked we would venture into the cold and dark and wind, as some misfortune might have befallen Glam."

"No, no," said Hjorda, thinking quickly. "Glam is strong and wily. No doubt he can look after himself, and the sheep have fine wool coats. See that you don't bother Tors with this."

"Certainly not, mistress," they said, knowing full well that Tors might take them up on their offer—and the bondservant with the addled wits and broken cheek being a friend of theirs.

And so the feast was laid out and eaten without Glam, and not a soul missed him until it was long past midnight and Tors asked, "But where is our winter shepherd?" By this time, the snow lay hip deep and the wind was cold enough to freeze people's breath in their throat, turn their eyeballs to ice, and crack open their very bones. Tors declared no man could step forth and live, so they turned their back to the door and drank barrel after barrel of ale, cask after cask of mead, and sang loudly enough to drown out the terrible noises and deep vibrations that rolled down the *fjell*—though Lisbet, the youngest daughter, who had fallen asleep on a bearskin after her third horn of mead, had strange and awful dreams of dark shapes battling on snow. Not long before dawn, sodden with celebration, they slept.

They woke after noon. Headaches and guilt are fine partners, so Tors did not have to urge the men to put on their boots and fur capes and caps and set off up the mountain. The pale winter Sun shone brilliant on the new-fallen snow and the air lay still. Snow crunched and one of the hired men could be heard groaning softly to himself every time his boots thumped down. They walked and walked, and eventually they heard the faint bleat of a sheep, and suddenly sheep were all around them; some nothing more than frozen woolly mounds in the snow, some bleating pitifully, some standing lost on crags or caught in bushes. Past the sheep they found a place where great boulders and trees had been torn from the ground and the snow beaten down in some mortal struggle. They walked faster now, and found a bloody, leveled place where Glam lay on his back, his strange seaweed eyes open to the sky and covered in snow, which did not melt. His skin was mottled and bloated, as though he had been dead a long, long time. Huge tracks, the size of barrel hoops, filled with frozen blood, led off to a deep and narrow gully. Something had fallen and splashed blood—hogsheads of the stuff—all about, but there were no more tracks so the men could not follow. The hired man stopped groaning long enough to peer into the gully, look at the blood, and say, "Nothing, not even a troll, could have survived that." There was general agreement, and the hired men and bondservants returned to Glam's body.

The bolder among them tried to move him, but it was as if his bones had turned to stone and he would not shift. Nor could they close his eyes. They herded up the sheep and returned to Torsgaard. "Glam is dead," they said to Tors. "He killed the troll and most of the sheep are living. We tried to bring him down but his body is strangely heavy."

"Well, take a yoke of oxen up the mountain and drag him down if necessary," said Tors. "We must bring him back to the hov for a proper send off."

"No," said Hjorda, "take faggots and tallow to the gully and burn him there, like carrion."

"Yes," said Kari.

"Yes," piped up Lisbet, whose dreams still hung about her.

"No," said Tors, and the men tried not to sigh. They took the oxen up the mountain, and some rope, but even with the oxen Glam's body, black as Hel now and bloated as a bladder, would not move even along level ground. After hours of this, with his men surly and tired and his own fingers and toes going white with cold, Tors unyoked the oxen. "He seems to want to stay here, so let him. We will cover him with stones."

So it was done, and they walked back to the women and a warm hearth.

Three days later, Lisbet woke in the middle of the night and ran to her mother. "Glam walks in my dreams!" Hjorda cuddled her

GLAM LAY ON HIS BACK, HIS STRANGE SEAWEED EYES OPEN TO THE SKY AND COVERED IN SNOW.

close and they both fell back to sleep. They were awakened in the morning by a shriek from the dairymaid, who had opened the door and tripped over a dog—or what was left of a dog—on the stoop. Later that morning, the haunch of mutton on the spit was found to be green and black on one side, and the servant who tended the ovens was clean out of her wits: "Glam came down the chimney, Glam came down the chimney, Glam came down the chimney," was all she could say, over and over.

Glam did not lie easy in his grave. He came again, and again, and again, driving more people mad, sending one hired man—who had taken the sheep out—headlong down the *fjell*, falling and breaking his neck, and the dairymaid running away to another farm, snow or no snow.

Hjorda found Tors. "You must burn him, husband."

But upon toiling up the mountain with faggots and tallow, and heaving aside the stones, they found nothing. When he returned, Tors told this to his wife, who nodded. "The troll lives in his bones and walks abroad wearing his skin, even under the Sun."

While Glam could appear during the day, it was at night that he spread true terror: He ran on the rooftops until the beams buckled, he rolled great boulders down the *fjell*, destroying some outbuildings entirely, and he laughed. His deep horrible laughter ground over Torsgaard and the farms of Oppland, crushing the spirit of men, driving cattle mad, and women to weeping in their terror that Glam was coming for *them*. The dairymaid who had escaped to another farm was found beside a barn, used and torn and tossed aside, like a broken doll. The still-living hired man ran mad and took an axe up the mountain, foaming at the mouth, vowing to chop Glam to pieces. The man's head, and pieces of his torso, rained down on Torsgaard all that night. The whole countryside felt disaster looming. Hjorda bade her daughters to sleep in her alcove, and they carried eating knives in their belts that were a little too long and a little too sharp for manners.

But as the days grew longer and the Sun stood higher in the sky, the hauntings lessened.

"Summer Sun is not kind to trolls," Hjorda observed. "But when winter comes he will be back, and no one in Oppland will be safe."

Tors did not want to hear it. He hired more men and a new dairymaid and worked to rebuild the broken outbuildings. His wife insisted that he strengthen the doors and roof beams of Torsgaard. And when this was done she sent him to the Thing, only this time she sent Kari with him. "Find a good strong man," she told her daughter, "one who can do more than tend the sheep during winter. Spend your portion to hire him if you must—for what good is a dowry to a dead maid?"

Now it happened that at this time a ship came into the *fjord* and Agnar the Strong, who was tired of adventuring in foreign lands, came to the Thing and heard that Tors of Torsgaard needed a winter shepherd but that no man would take up his offer. He sought out Tors and asked of him, "Why will no one take up this offer of yours?"

"The last shepherd, Glam, died on the *fjell* and there is some superstition attached to his name," said Tors evasively. "Have some of this mead." Now Tors was generally an honest man, and his shame at speaking false would have been apparent even to a lesser man of the world than Agnar. Agnar declined the mead and watched thoughtfully as Tors walked away, ashamed.

"Sir, allow me to offer you the mead again," came a woman's voice from behind him. He turned to face the maid with bright blue eyes. "I am Kari Torsdottir. Drink the mead and I will tell you of Glam." He did, and she did, leaving nothing out, and finishing, "—and so if you would look after our winter sheep and keep them safe, you could have my marriage portion and welcome."

"Money is no good to a dead man."

"My mother says that if you are but a strong man, good and true, and willing to listen to her, you will prevail, for trolls, even trolls who wear a man's skin, are stupid, being made mostly of rock."

And so Agnar the Strong agreed to come to Torsgaard and be the winter shepherd, but instead of waiting for *morketiden*, he returned directly with Tors and Kari, for he was curiously unwilling to let Tors' daughter out of his sight.

His open face, clear blue eyes, and ox-wide shoulders were welcomed by all. He noted the great gashes in the doors and the rents and holes in walls and gates but kept his own counsel. All through the summer, Agnar helped at the farm. He repaired stone walls and cut huge trees to reinforce roof beams, he helped herd cattle, and walked with Kari and Lisbet when they went berry-picking. As the evenings drew in, he held their yarn while they spinned and Hjorda did not fail to notice that he was always willing to fetch a cape for Kari, or pump the bellows to coax the fire hotter when she sat by it. A good man.

On the eve of the first day of *morketiden*, Hjorda drew him aside. "Glam will return, perhaps as soon as tomorrow."

"Glam doesn't frighten me!"

"Then you are more of a fool than I thought. He is more stone troll than man, and more heartless. Alive he was twice as powerful as a brace of bulls. Now even bulls would flee. And he wants to destroy this farm and all the people in it, only this time he is stronger and will be after choicer fare than the dairymaid." Hjorda noted Agnar's quick glance at Kari, combing her hair before the hearth. "Yes. Glam will come for the eldest daughter of the house. If you wish to save her, you will listen to me." But Agnar knew in his heart he needed nothing but his own strong back, and he laughed, and walked away.

That night the ground shook as Glam stalked the farm, his bones so heavy his feet sank 10 inches into the turf. His awful, grinding laugh filled the dark as he tore off chunks of wall and gate. A rending crash and a high-pitched scream split the dark, followed by the terrible sound of a large animal being torn limb from limb, and the splash and spatter of blood on the iron-hard ground of the barn enclosure. Then with a roar of satisfaction he ran up the mountain and was gone. When the people crept from the hearth hall the next day, they found Tors' poor horse ripped into quarters and its guts arranged in a rune of challenge.

The next night, Agnar the Strong, who had been a-viking as far as Novgorod and the shores of Ireland, who had burned priests and fought the hordes of Rus, who was famed for his strength and bravery from Oppland to Hordaland to Rogaland and beyond, sought out Hjorda, the woman of Torsgaard. "If you speak on this subject, I will listen, and do as you say."

AND SO AS THE SUN WENT DOWN THAT evening, Tors found himself strangely sleepy, and while the great fire still roared in the hearth, he fell sound asleep and snored on his wallbed by the inglenook. Hjorda directed Agnar to pick up her drugged husband and bundle him into the bed at the far end of the hall, away from the passage that led to the door. Then she dressed Lisbet in her warmest clothes, and the two of them stole out to hide in the barn, cosy in the straw with the cattle. Then there was only Kari and Agnar. They stood opposite each other by the hearth.

Agnar, forgetting himself in his fear for her, took her by the hand. "It's not too late to hide with your mother and sister."

"You will need me," she said. "We must bring Glam inside."

When the embers began to die, Kari, still wearing her clothes, left the curtain between the passage and the hall open, and lay down on the wallbed by the inglenook; Agnar, similarly dressed, wrapped himself like a sausage in an old, heavy fur cloak so that one end was tucked tightly under his feet and the other securely under his chin, leaving his head free so he could look about. Then he settled himself on the wall bench opposite Kari's bed. In front of the bench lay a bench beam, a huge ancient thing set into the floor when the farm was built. He set his feet against it and straightened his legs so he was firmly braced between the beam and the wall. And then he waited.

The embers glowed then dulled then sighed into ash. Kari's breath grew soft and slow and regular. Once, there was a rattle as a gust of

The hired man's head, and pieces of his torso, rained down on Torsgaard all that night.

wind shook the only gate still standing. Far, far away he heard the lonely howl of a wolf. But Agnar's heart did not beat soft or easy, it hammered like a smith beating hot iron into an axe-head, and he touched the sword at his belt constantly. The hilt was cold as only iron can be, and he could no longer quite feel his feet.

Sudden as an avalanche, something leaped onto the roof and thundered about, driving down with its heels, until the new beam buckled and splintered and the roof almost fell in. Glam. The walls shook and Glam jumped down, and the earth trembled as he strode to the door. A sharp creak as he laid his huge horny hand on the door and suddenly it was ripped away, lintel and all, and moonlight briefly lit the hearthroom. But then Glam blocked out all light as he thrust his huge head through. The whites of his strange eyes gleamed like sickly oysters, and Agnar's heart failed him. Glam's head brushed the roof of the passage as he came into the hall.

"Glam," said a soft voice, and Kari stood there slim and brave by the door, her hair silver in the moonlight. "I will come with you, but it is cold outside and I must have a bearskin to lie on. Bring that old cloak on the bench by the fire. I'll wait for you outside." And Agnar's heart filled with admiration for her and there was no room left for fear.

Glam strode to the sausage-shaped bundle of fur, and tried to pick it up with one hand. Agnar was braced and ready. He made no sound and the fur did not move. Glam pulled harder, but Agnar braced his feet all the more firmly. He was sweating now. Glam grunted, and laid two hands on the bundle, and now a titanic struggle began, Glam hauling up, Agnar fighting to push against the bench beam with all the strength of his muscle and sinew yet make no noise. But then Glam put his back into it and the old cloak tore in two. He stood there, the fur in his hands and his horrible eyes staring, and Agnar flung himself at the troll, gripped him around the waist and set his feet. With a massive grunt, he squeezed tight and started to bend the monster backward. It would not be the first time he had snapped a man's spine in a wrestling match.

But Glam was now more, much more than a man, his bones were made of the rock of the mountain, and with a single heave he had Agnar off his feet and was flinging him about. But Agnar had been in many wrestling matches and he did all he could to brace his legs against roof beam or hearth edge, bench or wall. In the passageway he strained until the veins stood out in his neck and sweat sprang out on his forehead, and always he avoided the ruined doorway. It was bad enough in the enclosed spaces of the hall; outdoors, it would be seven times worse. Closer he was drawn to the door, and closer still. Sweat poured from him. With a furious wriggle, he eeled around in Glam's grip until his back was to the awful face and bull-like chest. He dug his heels against the threshold stone and with a strength that was equal parts fear, determination, and desperation, he leaned in toward the last breath of warm, indoor air. As Glam hauled backward with all his might, so too did Agnar thrust *backward*, and his last strength and the inhuman force of Glam's heave hurled them both outside. Glam, with Agnar still clutched to his breast, landed spine down across a rock. The spine parted with a loud *crack*, a sound that would live in Agnar's mind for the rest of his days.

Agnar could not rise; all he could do was lie like a gasping fish in the dying troll's grasp, drained not just by the effort of fighting a monster, but by the awful touch of its skin against his own. His strength ebbed and ebbed, until his muscles were made of lead and his bones felt like lace and he could not even touch the hilt of his sword with his fingertips. And then Glam spoke, hoarse and horrible in his ear.

"You will live, Agnar the Strong, but you will never be the same. You will always look into the dark and see my face, hear my voice, and know yourself." And the troll laughed, dark and full of wickedness. At the laugh, Agnar felt the strength flow back. He sprang to his feet, pulled free his sword, and swung. Once, twice, three times, and the muscle and sinew and bone of Glam's neck parted, and the head, like some vile rock, rolled free, and Agnar did not laugh, but wept.

The Moon tugged clear of its cloud, and Kari ran to his side, and Hjorda and Lisbet emerged from the barn. Even Tors stumbled up from his drugged sleep and stood blinking and beaming with happiness on the soiled turf. "Agnar the Strong! You can have anything of mine you name!" And Kari took his hand and kissed it, and laid it against her cheek. Agnar held her close but could not meet her gaze.

He stood, numb and tired, while Kari wrapped him in the wolfskin and the servants brought him mead warmed by the hurriedly stirred fire, and while Hjorda ordered in a great voice that the hired men bring faggots and tallow and waste not a minute.

They burned Glam right there, outside the hall. And then they burned the ashes. And when the ashes were cold they were gathered in the torn cloak and wrapped tight, and Hjorda saw to it that it was thrown into a chasm, and huge boulders hurled down on top of it.

Torsgaard celebrated all day and into the evening, with men and women arriving from all over Oppland to share the good news. In all that time, Kari remained at Agnar's side, and she noted how he shook with fatigue. Eventually the fire dwindled and the torches were doused. Everyone slept. In the middle of the night, Kari was awakened up by a strange noise, like a child crying. It was Agnar, trying to light the torch, and rocking back and forth. "He will come for me. He will come for me."

"He is dead, beloved."

"I am all alone and he will come for me!"

"You will never be alone again." But he would not hear her, he just rocked and rocked, back and forth.

And the story goes that though Kari stayed by his side every living minute, much to the disapproval of the very traditional Opplanders, and married him not long after, his fear grew worse and he began to rock back and forth and light torches even in the daytime. In the end, they say he ran out, barking mad, and Kari was left without a husband and the hall at the Oppland farm gradually declined. No flowers ever grew on the chasm where they had thrown Glam's ashes.

And that's the end of the story. Agnar was a hero. He saved a household from Glam, the man who became a troll. But before that he was called a hero for slaughtering women and children, roasting priests on the spit, and burning down churches while he drank the altar wine and laughed. "Never mind," his father would have said after that first trip a-viking, "forget that sucking sound your sword makes when you pull it from a woman's stomach."

And so you punched a bully on the nose and broke it, and some will call you a hero, and some will think you a beast, and you feel so confused you have worked yourself into a fever, and it's not something your mother can kiss away in the morning. Nor should she, for if you pretend it never happened you will never bring it into the light to examine and it will fester there in the dark and grow strong, as a troll does, and one day when you are grown and you punch a man on the nose, the weight of all the things you have done and tried to forget will rise up and eat you up from inside.

There, now, you're sweating; perhaps the fever is breaking. In a little while you will sleep, and your mother will wake and come sit by your bedside, and in the morning she will be the first thing you see. You may pretend that this never happened, that I was never here, that this was all a dream. If you like. It's your choice, weigh it carefully before we meet again. ❧

Princess Fat Grits

Lesson in What Matters, No. 7

Illustration by Annie Lunsford

You do amuse me, locking yourself in your room like this and sulking. What did you expect? Surely you're not really surprised that your parents believe 15 to be too young to go bungee jumping. The question is, what are you going to do about it?

What do you mean, Does it matter? Of course it matters. You're reaching a point where you have to decide who will shape your life: you, or your parents. In the old days, in medieval Europe, these teenager-parent clashes didn't happen, at least among noble families. They had the foster system: Baron William's son John goes to live with the baron's friend, Earl Harold, while Harold's daughter, Hild, comes to live with William and his wife Ethelfrith. Lots of familial bonding, and the adolescent gets to try out his or her wings as a nominal adult in a household that doesn't think of them as that whiny four-year-old brat who, in what seems like only yesterday, was being taught how to hold an eating knife without stabbing himself. All very satisfactory.

The thing is, children often do stupid, stupid things in reaction to their parents.

Once upon a time there was a Princess called Grits. She was the king's only child, and she was very fat. She enjoyed her weight: The rolls under her chin helped her keep her head held high; the pads of firm flesh at hip and thigh made her walk stately and imposing. Sometimes when she was sitting down to breakfast she would rest a hand on her belly and smile.



The king, being a king, was considered portly, but Princess Grits didn't mind being called, well, fat. She was also beautiful, and as she was the king's only daughter, and heir to his position and his fortune, she had many suitors. They came to her, one by one, blond and pink and earnest and said, "Oh, Princess Grits, your eyes are more mysterious than the ocean at midnight, your mouth as red as rubies, your hair more glossy than the coat of the finest chestnut mare. My heart belongs to you. Command me!"

And Princess Grits would look at them, considering, and say, "Sir Knight, go kill the dragon of the Western Marches, the one that burns all the peasants' crops and makes the air over our holiday palace smell so nasty. Then I'll think about tying the knot."

SO THE NEXT MORNING, THE KNIGHT WOULD clomp down the palace steps in armor that smelled of metal polish, sword clanking beside him, and scramble up onto his horse. Princess Fat Grits would come and wave him off, then go back into the palace for brunch. She chewed happily on her waffles and pancakes, her toast and her paté, secure in the knowledge that the knight would never return.

This went on for some time. Princess Grits ate many breakfasts and brunches and lunches and dinners, and got fatter.

Eventually, the nature of her suitors began to change. The earnest knights were replaced by grim captains with practical leather helmets and efficient-looking swords. They fared no better against the dragon, of course, but the king got cross.

"Look, daughter," he said, "I didn't particularly mind your getting rid of all the pompous nitwit second-sons of minor nobility, but now all my army commanders are getting eaten. What will happen if there's a war? Why can't you just marry some nice earl and have a few babies, instead of sending all these poor hopefuls off to their deaths. After all, I'm not getting any younger; the kingdom will belong to you one day."

"I know," Princess Grits said, "and then everyone will have to call it a realm. Or maybe I could cause the royal lexicographers to invent a new word: Queendom. By the way, father, why don't you try one of these truffles, they're lovely."

At this point, the king lost his temper. "That's it!" he shouted. "That is absolutely it! No more suitors to the dragon, do you hear? I absolutely forbid it!"

"But father, I swore I'd never marry anyone unless they could deal with that dragon."

"Then unswear."

"That wouldn't be ethical."

"Fiddlesticks to ethics! You're royal. Royalty can do what it wants."

"Better watch your blood pressure, father."

"Fiddlesticks to my blood pressure!" But he did calm down a little. "Look, no one can deal with that dragon anyway. It's just not humanly possible."

"Oh yes it is."

"No it jolly well isn't!"

"Yes it is."

"Well if you're so sure, why don't you just trot along to the Western Marches and attend to the little matter yourself!"

Princess Grits, who had been a bit bored lately, wiped her fingers on a snowy white napkin. "Fine," she said, "I will."

"What?"

"I said, fine, I'll go fix the dragon."

Libby Thomas's Chemistry Set

Lesson in What Matters, No.4

NO, DON'T MOVE. YOU need to conserve the little oxygen that remains. What? You're dying from lack of air and you want to know how I can fit inside this box that took you eight minutes to squeeze yourself into before you pulled the door shut? We've been through this before. Just think of me as a figment of your imagination if it makes you feel any better.

Pulling that door shut was not a good idea. These old refrigerators don't open the same way later models do, with a push. Still, you can't think of everything. Your mother has told you not to experiment, and perhaps in this instance she had a point, at least in the sense that a little more caution was probably indicated, but I wouldn't want you to leap to conclusions: there's nothing wrong with experimentation in general. It can lead to some very interesting results. Just imagine: If no one ever experimented, you wouldn't even know that it was oxygen your lungs were crying out for at this moment. You might think it was light.

I know it's hot. I know you can't breathe. Panic is the very last thing you need at the moment. Try to relax. The oxygen will last longer.

Let me tell you a story of a girl about your age who liked to experiment.

Libby Thomas was 12 when she got a chemistry set for Christmas. She fell in love with it and spent the next two weeks making foul-smelling concoctions in her bedroom. Nothing ever seemed to go quite right, and once she blew off her bangs when a test tube exploded, but she kept going, and she kept a careful record of everything she did.

One day, while her father was muttering about the snow and Libby herself was downstairs writing a letter to Carrie, her penfriend in Kansas, Libby's mother decided to tidy up her daughter's room. The room reeked of the various experiments assembled on the desk; she opened the window and poured the whole mess out into the garden.

Later, when Libby's father took a shovel and went into the back garden to clear the path, he fell over. He tried to get up again but slipped. He was quite stubborn and kept trying but after he landed on the same elbow for the third time he gave up and crawled his way back to the doorstep. Libby and her mother had to do the shoveling.

LIBBY WAS ENJOYING DOING something useful and physical when her little brother arrived home. He stepped from the back door with a manly swagger and promptly fell down. Libby watched with interest as he floundered about and went red in the face: For some reason he seemed unable to get back on his feet....

Suspicion dawned on Mrs. Thomas's face and she looked hard at her daughter, but behind her bland expression Libby was thoughtful.

The next day, after more thought, Libby asked her brother to invite some of his friends to play in the garden. Like most young boys, he did not stop to think, so agreed readily enough. An hour later, half a dozen boys were tromping through the house, trailing clods of snow and one little sister of whom they had been unable to rid themselves. Libby was waiting for them in the garden.

Sure enough, as soon as their feet touched the snow, they all fell over. Except the little girl and, of course, Libby. They smiled at each other.

Later, when the boys were having their tears dried, their bruises kissed better, and the snowballs—that the little girl had stuffed down their necks—removed, Libby was

The thing is, children often do stupid, stupid things in reaction to their parents.

"But you can't! I mean, what if you get eaten? No, I forbid it."

"You can't stop me."

"Oh yes I can, young lady. Let's see how far you get from the palace without a horse to carry you or victuals from the royal kitchen to sustain you!" And he stomped out, looking pleased with himself.

Now Princess Grits, when she set her mind to something, could be very, very stubborn. She had said she would fix the dragon and so she would by goddess fix it, horse or no horse, food or no food.

THE ROAD TO THE WESTERN MARCHES WAS LONG AND HARD. Princess Grits got very hungry, but her obstinacy sustained her. *Food or no food*, she'd said. The road became a cart track, then a narrow stony trail; hard flints cut through her sturdy sandals and made her feet bleed. *Horse or no horse.* She went on.

The track wound up into bleak and barren hills where nobody lived, and the air smelled of sulphur. Princess Grits plodded on. The hills became mountains. Now she muttered to herself as she walked. She was very hungry, and very, very irritable.

By the time the dragon's cave came into view, Princess Grits figured it was all the dragon's fault.

The dragon was curled around a pile of tacky gee-gaws looking plump and content and licking the inside of a leather helmet. Nestled in the curve of a breastplate of rather ornate and old-fashioned design were six large eggs: the dragon's clutch.

"You!" Princess Grits shouted.

The dragon looked up. "Me?"

"Yes, you with the wings. I've come to remove your dragonly menace from the realm. I'm Princess Fat Grits, maybe you've heard of me."

"Indeed." The dragon looked at her through half-closed eyes. "Is it a joke?"

Princess Grits was momentarily flummoxed. "A joke?"

"Yes, your name: Princess Fat Grits, a joke. Like calling huge men 'Tiny.'"

The princess was stumped. "What do you mean?"

"My dear, you're as thin as a stick. The stress of the journey I expect." Smoke trickled from its nose in amusement. "Still, it won't stop me from roasting you slowly and consuming you, morsel by

Continued on page 78

upstairs in her room, frowning over her notes. Although she was not entirely sure what made her mixture act as it did, she was confident of her ability to duplicate it.

The next day, Libby was to be seen prowling around the neighborhood carrying a stoppered test tube filled with a colorless liquid. She was very selective. A couple of drops on the snow outside the pub, a little dribble in the slush in front of the hardware store, a careful trail along the exact center of all the sidewalks she herself was accustomed to using. Last of all, she flung a flamboyant scatter over the pristine football pitch which took up most of the park. She settled back to take notes.

In bed that night, Libby reviewed her findings by flashlight: As long as the ground was cold enough and wet enough, all the men and boys fell over, all the women and girls did not.

On Monday evening Libby went as usual to the youth club at the community center. She set off early and spent some time walking up and down the various paths around the building before the others arrived. An hour later, she was agreeing with her friends how nice it was that none of the boys had turned up and they could finally get a turn on the pool table.

When Libby got home and went into the living room to say good night, she was a little surprised to see pictures of the local pub and park and hardware store on the evening news. The newscaster was explaining in a funny voice how they had had to send a women-only crew to cover the story because their regular team kept falling over, wrecking two Arriflexes, a Uher....

Mr. Thomas was sitting in front of the TV, looking bewildered and sipping at a strong whiskey. He hardly noticed Libby's goodnight kiss. But when Libby bent to kiss her mother, Mrs. Thomas glanced at the news, then at her daughter, so significantly that Libby's heart sank. Then, to Libby's surprise, her mother's eyelid dropped in a wink.

Libby went upstairs slowly. While she brushed her teeth and got into her pajamas, she thought very hard. During the holidays, she could make two batches of the mixture a day. The shed at the bottom of the garden would do very nicely, seeing as her father would no longer be using it.

She climbed into bed.

If she and the other girls in her chemistry class told Ms. Primpsett they had a special project, maybe they would be allowed to use the lab one night a week. Ms. Primpsett might even help them. If the heating broke down the way it did last winter, they could start in the school itself, get to use the computer room whenever they wanted without some boy shoving them aside while old Mr. Bolan pretended not to notice.

She turned out the light.

Some of the girls in her chemistry class had friends at the neighboring St. John's school; between them they could cover the town. Next time there was a disco it would be the boys who would have to be ferried by car to the door and met again by worried Moms. Libby and her friends could walk there in their own time, safe and happy in the cold, crisp dark.

She would write to Carrie, who had penfriends in Japan and Canada. The world could become a very interesting place.

She fell asleep and dreamed of sleek planes criss-crossing the world, spraying....

But you can't fall asleep, not now. Wake up. Can't you hear? Perhaps you can't. They made these refrigerators of much more sturdy material in days gone by. I think it would be appropriate if you shouted now, gave in to that panic. Don't be afraid to rock the fridge about a bit: Your mother and father and several concerned neighbors are picking their way over the dump in your direction. You will be unconscious by the time they open the door, but you should survive. That's it. Shout, bang, rattle. Here they come. Don't forget: Your mother will tell you never to experiment again, but you mustn't listen, don't let this little mistake put you off. Remember Libby. Not experimenting will make you timid: It matters. I hope I don't have to remind you, next time we meet. ❧



No, love can't really transcend the bonds of time. But it can do the next best thing.

A Ghost of an Affair

1. MOST GHOST STORIES BEGIN OR END WITH A GHOST. Not this one. This begins and ends with a love affair. That one of the partners was a ghost has little to do with things, except for a complication or two.

The heart need not be beating to entertain the idea of romance. To think otherwise is to misunderstand the nature of the universe.

To think otherwise is to miscalculate the odds of love.

2. ANDREA CROW DID NOT LOOK AT ALL LIKE HER name, being fair-haired and soft voiced. But she had a scavenger's personality; that is, she collected things with a fierce dedication. As a girl she had collected rocks and stones, denuding her parents' driveway of mica-shining pebbles. As an adolescent she had turned the rock collection into an interest in gemstones. By college she was majoring in geology, minoring in jewelry making. (It

BY JANE YOLEN

Illustration by Steve Adler

was one of those schools so prevalent in the '80s where life-experience substituted for any real knowledge. Only a student bent on learning ever learned anything. But perhaps that is true even in Oxford, even in Harvard.)

Andrea's rockhound passion made her a sucker for young men carrying ropes and pitons and she learned to scramble up stone faces without thinking of the danger. For a while she even thought she might attempt the Himalayas. But a rock-climbing friend died in an avalanche there and so she decided going to gem shows was far safer. She was a scavenger but she wasn't stupid.

The friend who died in the avalanche was not the ghost in this story. That was a dead *girl* friend and Andrea was depressingly straight in her love life.

Andrea graduated from college and began a small jewelry business in Chappaqua with a healthy jump-start from her parents who died suddenly in a car crash going home from her graduation. They left a tidy sum and their house to Andrea who, after a suitable period of mourning, plunged into work, turning the garage into her workroom.

She sold her jewelry at crafts fairs and Renaissance Faires and to several of the large stores around the country that found her Middle Evils line especially charming. The silver and gold work was superb, of course. She had been well trained. But it was the boxing of the jewelry—in polished rosewood with gold or silver hinges—as well as the printed legends included in each piece—that made her work stand out.

Still, her business remained small until one Christmas Neiman Marcus ordered five thousand adder stone rings in Celtic scrolled rosewood boxes. The rings, according to the legend, "ensured prosperity, repelled evil spirits, and in 17th-century Scotland were considered to keep a child free of the whooping cough." She finished that order so far in the black that she only had to go to one Renaissance Faire the following summer for business.

Well, to be honest, she would have gone anyway. She needed the rest after the Neiman Marcus push. Besides, she enjoyed the Faire. Many of her closest friends were there.

Well—all of her closest friends were there.

All three of them.

3.

SIMON MORRISON WAS THE SON AND grandson and great grandson of Crail fisherfolk. He was born to the sea. But the sea was not to his liking. And as he had six brothers born ahead of him who could handle the fishing lines and nets, he saw no reason to stay in Crail for longer than was necessary.

So on the day of his majority, June 17, 1847, he kissed his mother sweetly and said farewell to his father's back, for he was not so big that his Da—a small man with a great hand—might not have whipped him for leaving.

Simon took the northwest road out of Crail and made his way by foot to the ferry that crossed the River Forth and so on into Edinburgh. And there he could have lost himself in the alehouses, as had many a lad before him.

But Simon was not just *any* lad. He was a lad with a passionate dream. And while it was not his father's and grandfather's and great grandfather's dream of herring by the hundredweight, it was a dream nonetheless.

His dream was to learn to work in silver and gold.

Now, how—you might well ask—could a boy raised on the East Neuk of Fife—in a little fishing village so ingrown a boy's cousin might be his uncle as well—how could such a boy know the first thing about silver and gold?

The answer is easier than you might suspect.

The laird and his wife had had a silver wedding anniversary and a collection was taken up for a special gift from the town. All the small people had given a bit of money they had put aside; the gentry added more. And there was soon enough to hire a silversmith from Edinburgh to make a fine silver centerpiece in the shape of a stag rearing up, surrounded by eight hunting dogs. The dogs looked just like the laird's own pack, including a stiff-legged mastiff with a huge underslung jaw.

The centerpiece had been on display for days in the Crail town hall, near the mercat cross, before the gifting of it. Simon had gone to see it out of curiosity, along with his brothers.

It was the first time that art had ever touched his life.

Touched?

He had been bowled over, knocked about, nearly slain by the beauty of the thing.

After that, fishing meant nothing to him. He wanted to be an artisan. He did not know enough to call it art.

When he got to Edinburgh, a bustle of a place and bigger than 20 Crails laid end to end to end, Simon looked up that same silversmith and begged to become the man's apprentice.

The man would have said no. He had apprentices enough as it was. But some luck was with Simon, for the next day when Simon came around to ask again, two of the lowest apprentices were down with a pox of some kind and had to be sent away. And Simon—who'd been sick with that same pox in his childhood and never again—got to fetch and carry for months on end until by the very virtue of his hard working, the smith offered him a place.

And that is how young Simon Morrison, the fisherlad, became not-so-young Simon Morrison, the silversmith. He was well beyond 30 and not married. He worked so hard, he never had an eye for love, or so it was said by the other lads.

He only had an eye for art.

4.

NOW IN THE GREAT COURSE OF THINGS, these two should never have met. Time itself was against them—that greatest divide—a hundred years to be exact.

Besides, Simon would never have gone to America. America was a land of cutthroats and brigands. He did not waste his heart thinking on it, though—in fact—he never wasted his heart on anything but his work.

And though Andrea had once dreamed of Katmandu and Nepal, she had never fancied Scotland with its "dudes in skirts," as her friend Heidi called them.

But love, though it may take many a circuitous route, somehow manages to get from one end of the map to another.

Always.

5.

BECAUSE OF THE ADDER RINGS—A GREAT hit with the Neiman Marcus buyers—Andrea was sent to Scotland by *Vogue* magazine to pose before a ruin of a 14th-century castle. The castle, called Dunottar, commanded a spit of land some two-and-a-half hour's drive along the coast from Edinburgh, and had at one point been the hiding place for the Scottish crown jewels.

Windy and raw weather did not stop the Dunottar shoot; in fact it so speeded things up, the shoot finished early on a Thursday morning. Andrea then had three-and-a-half days to explore the gray stone city of Edinburgh.

She loved the twisty streets and closes, with names like Cowgate and Grassmarket and Lady Wynd, and the antique jewelry shop on a little lane called Thistle.

Edinburgh seemed to be a city of rain and rainbows. A single rainbow over the Greek revival temple on the hill, and a double over the great gray castle.

"If there is such a thing as magic ..." Andrea found herself whispering aloud, "it's here in this city." For the first time she actually found herself believing in the possibility.

The first two days in Edinburgh went quickly, but she soon tired of tourists who spoke every language except English. She knew she needed some quiet, far away from the Royal Mile and its aggressively Celtic shoppes, and far from the Americanization of Princes

Street, the main shopping road, where a McDonalds (without the arches) sat right next to British franchises.

It was then that she discovered a hidden walk that wound around and under the city.

Leith Walk.

Leith had been the old port on the Firth and once a city in its own right, but was now a bustling part of Edinburgh. The old port area after years of decay was now being tarted up, and modernized flats with large *To Let* signs dotted the streets. At first Andrea kept misreading the signs, wondering why toilets were advertised everywhere. Then giggling over her mistake, she went aboard a floating ship restaurant for a quiet lunch alone.

She didn't mean to listen in, but she overheard an elderly English couple near her talking about Leith Walk, which sounded wonderfully off the beaten tourist path.

"Excuse me," she said, leaning over, "I couldn't help hearing you mention Leith Walk. It's not in my book." She pointed to the green *Michelin Guide* by her plate.

They told her how to find the walk which, they said, snaked under and over parts of Edinburgh along the Leith River.

"Although the locals call it the 'Water of Leith,'" the woman said. "And as you go along, you will often feel as if you had stumbled onto a lost path into faerie."

Andrea was struck by how earnestly she spoke.

"The Walk looks as if it ends up in Dean Village," the English woman added.

"An old grain milling center, that," interrupted her companion. "End of Bell's Brae. Off Queensferry. Solid bridge. Pretty, too." His bristly ginger moustache seemed to strain his words for they came out crisp and unadorned.

"But do not be fooled, my dear," the woman continued. "It becomes a mere trickle of a path. But it does go on."

"The path ..." Andrea mused, remembering her Tolkein, "goes ever on...."

The English couple laughed and the man said something in a strange tongue.

"I beg your pardon," Andrea said. "I don't speak...." She wasn't in fact sure what language he had used.

"I beg *your* pardon," the man said. "Certain you'd know Elvish." His eyes twinkled at her and he no longer seemed so starchy. "I simply wished you a good journey and a safe return."

"Thank you," Andrea said.

She smiled at them as they stood and went out, without—Andrea noticed—leaving any kind of a tip.

6.

SIMON WAS NOT MUCH OF A DRINKER, certainly not as Scots go. He rarely went out with the lads.

He was a walker, though.

Hill walking when he could get out of the city bustle on holiday. Town walking when he could not.

He always took his lunch with him, and during a workday, he would spend that precious time walking, eating as he went.

Fond of hiking up Calton Hill or Arthur's Seat—both of them affording panoramic views of the city—Simon also liked strolling to the Royal Botanic Garden. There he'd dine amid the great patches of carefully designed flowerbeds or, in winter, in the Tropical Palm House, enjoying the moist heat.

Occasionally he would take a sketch-book and set off along the winding Water of Leith walk in the direction of St. Bernard's Well. He passed few people there, unlike his walks up Calton Hill or Arthur's Seat. And he enjoyed the solitude.

The little drawings he did as he sat by the river found their way into his silverwork—intricate twists of foliage, the splay of water over stone, the feathering on the wings of ravens and rooks.

He had begun such drawings as an apprentice, and continued them—with his master's approval—as a journeyman. He perfected them when he became a master silversmith himself.

In time he became famous for them.

In time.

7.

SO YOU THINK YOU SEE THE ARC OF THE plot now. They will meet—Simon and Andrea—along the Leith Walk.

They will fall in love.

Marry.

And....

But you have forgotten that when Andrea takes her first steps along the Leith Walk, heading away from the old port toward Dean's Village and beyond, Simon is already dead some one hundred years. There's not a bit of flesh on those old bones now.

It does present certain intractable problems.

For logic, yes.

Not for love.

8.

IT WAS A LOVELY EARLY SPRING AFTERNOON and Simon was grateful to have a half-day off. Having had an ugly argument with another of the journeymen over the amount of silver needed for a casting, he wanted some time to walk off his anger.

His anger was with himself more than anyone else, for the other journeyman had been right after all. Simon was not used to making such mistakes.

He was not used to making *any* mistakes.

The master valued Simon too much to argue over half a day. Besides, he knew that with Simon, nothing was ever really lost.

"Go on out, lad," he said. Although Simon was scarcely a lad anymore, the master still thought of him that way. "Walk about and think up some more of yer lovely designs."

Simon decided on following the Leith path, and he walked with a brisk stride that dis-invited even a nod from the few people he met along the way.

But by the time he got to St. Bernard's Well—that strange stone neo-Classical folly built by the Waterworks over an actual well whose waters were quite the vogue among the New Town gentry—the majority of his anger had passed and he sat down for a bit to sketch, his back against the stone wall.

There was a patch of uncurling ferns near his feet and he loved the sight of the little plants as they unbent their necks. He got the patch down in seven quick lines and then, with three more lines, one fern became a horse's head.

Simon laughed at the conceit. Rather more fanciful than his usual work, but perhaps—he thought—perhaps it was time for *him* to uncurl as well. He was 36 years old and half his life gone by. What had happened to the dream that the boy who walked from Crail to Edinburgh had had?

He realized how dreadfully misplaced his anger had been that morning.

As he was thus musing, out of the clear slate of sky there came a crack of thunder.

"By God," Simon cried, and stood up quickly, preparing to run to the sanctuary of the folly. He was a son of fisherfolk, after all, and not about to believe the innocence of that blue sky.

As he turned....

9.

ANDREA'S WALK ALONG THE LEITH RIVER had started quietly enough in bright sunshine. But the weather report on the television that morning had promised scattered sunshine and occasional rain.

"Or was it scattered rain and occasional sunshine?" she murmured. Each of her days in Scotland so far had begun with that same promise from the weather man. Each of those promises had been exactly fulfilled, Scottish weather being charmingly predictable.

The scattering began with a bit of spitting, not enough rain to be worried about, only enough to be annoying.

It was not money that worried her. It was the rest of Simon's life she was afraid of.

Andrea had no idea where the next exit from the Leith Walk might be, and there was no way she was going to climb over the fence, go through that little woods, and then scale the stone wall she could almost make out, just to get away from a spatter. She'd been a mountain hiker too long to worry about such things.

Besides, she thought—jamming her pretty blue Scottish tam on her head and tucking her hair under it—in her khaki pants and Aran sweater she was more than ready for a wee bit of rain. In fact she positively welcomed it.

But the little rain suddenly turned into a downpour.

Luckily that was when she spotted the stone temple ahead. Racing for it, she got in the lee of the wall before the major flood opened up overhead.

Mounting the steps two at a time, she thought she was safe when—without warning—a bolt of lightning struck a little spire on the top of the temple's roof, traveled down a wire, and leaped over to the metal ornament on her tam.

She did not so much feel the shock as smell it, a kind of sharpness in the nose and on the tongue. Her skin prickled, the little hairs rising up on her arms. Then she sank into unconsciousness, falling over the side of the wall and onto the slippery grass below.

10.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE, YOU ARE thinking.

How corny.

The sky was actually blue at the moment, except for patches of clouds scudding backward, in an effort to escape time.

Andrea's eyelids fluttered open.

She sighed.

The first thing she saw was the face of a very concerned youngish man staring down at her.

The second thing she saw was that his eyes were the same bleached blue as the sky over them.

Then she noticed the ginger eyebrows and the cheekbones sharp enough to cut cheese with.

"Am I dead?" Andrea whispered. "Are you an angel?"

Corny yes.

But most lives are as filled with corn as a Kansas field.

Or—if you prefer—a cornfield in east Fife.

Different kinds of corn, of course.

Different kinds of lives.

11.

ONE MINUTE SIMON HAD BEEN SITTING quietly drawing. The next minute he heard the crack of thunder, and after that a body came hurtling over the side of the stone wall and sprawled face up at his feet.

For a moment Simon thought it was a boy. The tam and the pants confused him. But once he'd looked carefully—at the face with its lambent skin, at the long black curls spilling out of the tam, at the soft swell of breast beneath the woolen jumper—he knew it was no boy.

Then the fallen girl's eyes opened. They were almost purple, enormous, lovely.

"Am I dead?" she asked. "Are you an angel?"

"Och, lass, I'm a silversmith. And how could ye have died from that wee jump?" he asked.

"I mean from the lightning," she said.

He glanced up, worried. After all—there *had* been thunder. But the gray clouds had sped away.

Glancing down, he said, "No lightning, lass. I think ye swooned and fell over the wall."

"I'm not the swooning type," she said.

"Then what type are ye?"

He meant nothing bad by the question, but she looked confused. Then she tried to sit up and seemed to be having difficulty doing it. So Simon put a hand to her back to help her up. And though he'd never put an arm around a woman before without being related to her, this seemed so natural that he did not give it another thought.

However, it was then that he realized she was not the *young* lass he'd taken her for. There were a few strands of silver in her hair, tangling through the curls. He imagined taking that silver and weaving it into a pattern on a bracelet.

As his master knew, nothing with Simon was ever lost.

12.

SHE SAW HIS SKETCHES, SHE PULLED a small notebook from a back pocket of her trousers and showed him hers. They spoke of silver and gold and the intricacies of cloisonne. They talked of working with electrum and foil and plating. They compared the virtues of enameling and embossing.

They did not speak of love.

It was too soon.

And soon it was too late.

Somewhere a minute or an hour or a day or a week later, they figured out the difference in time.

"You're an old man when I am born," she mused.

"I am dead when you are born," he said.

But time has a way of correcting itself. Of making sense of nonsense.

And one minute or an hour or a day or a week later, Andrea turned a corner of a street off Grassmarket—dressed now of course as a young woman should—and she went in one step from streetcars to Subarus.

"Simon!" she cried, turning back.

But Simon and his century were gone.

13.

ANDREA RETURNED HOME BUT SHE didn't feel at home. The sky over Chappaqua had a dirty, smudged look. The air reeked. She could not bear the billboards along the highway or the myriad choices of toilet cleansers and bath soaps at the supermarket.

She shut off her TV and sold her fax. She went shopping for long skirts and shirtwaists in secondhand shops.

She told her customers that she had a great deal of back work to do and gave them the names of several other jewelers they might patronize instead.

She said goodbye to her three friends.

"I'm thinking of moving to Scotland," she told them. She did not tell them where.

Or when.

Then she sold her parents' house, took the money in a banker's check, bought a ticket on Icelandic Air, and flew with a small suitcase of secondhand clothes to Scotland.

The Royal Bank of Scotland was more than happy to open an account for her, and she rented a small flat in Leith.

Then she set to work. Not as a silversmith, not as a jewelry maker. She became a researcher, haunting the Edinburgh churches to see if she could find where Simon had been buried. To see if there was some mention of him in the town rolls.

Continued on page 80

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Diane and Leo Dillon: A Celebra

Anyone who attended the 1999 World Fantasy Convention in Providence, Rhode Island had the special pleasure of seeing the original artwork of Diane and Leo Dillon. Some of us were actually lucky enough to meet and talk with these Grandmasters of illustration. The pleasure of their company almost matches the delights of their art. Their funny, upfront, retrospective slide show and lecture had the audience cheering and calling for more.

They've done it all, from paperback covers to album covers to posters to children's books.

Their award-winning children's books include back-to-back Caldecott winners *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* by Verna Aarderna (1976, Dial Books) and *Ashanti to Zulu* by Margaret Musgrove (1977, Dial Books). They have won most every major award for illustration in children's books, including the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration for *Aida* by Leontyne Price, the *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book Award (three times), and the Hans Christian Andersen Most Highly Commended citation for their entire body of work. They've been inducted into the Illustrators Hall of Fame and received a Grandmaster Award from Spectrum 4.



Their famous covers for the Ace Specials series give a brilliant demonstration of what is possible in fantastic cover art, and not only cemented their friendship with the late, great, editor Terry Carr, but made them life members of the fantastic art field.

By Karen Haber


tion



PREVIOUS SPREAD, LEFT: An arctic Fantasy takes shape in Northern Lullaby. *RIGHT: An elfin* Sabriel *for Harper Collins.*

ABOVE: A Woman of the Future *takes many forms in this Bantam cover. RIGHT: There's lots for children to look at in* Pish, Posh, said Hieronymus Bosch.

Another group of remarkable covers, for Harlan Ellison's work including *The Deathbird Stories*, indelibly linked them to the writer.

They've won the Best Professional Artist Hugo (1971), the Balrog Award for Fantasy, and the Lensman (both in 1982). Their work is treasured by collectors, and hangs in the permanent collection of the Society of Illustrators in New York City.

Diane and Leo Dillon could be described by many adjectives: generous, funny, gracious, gentle, playful, and monstrously talented, but most of all they are fearless, both artistically and personally. They've tried any and every medium, and probably

Sharing a studio, they worked side by side, passing the work back and forth.

invented a few—such as pastel engraving—along the way. They have adapted diverging personal artistic styles—despite the fact that she paints tighter and he paints looser … or is it the other way around?—into a distinctive "Dillon" look that, regardless of medium or subject, wins them more fans every year.

They were an interracial couple long before it was hip—so early, in fact, that when a cop came upon them kissing in a doorway in New York City's bohemian Soho neighborhood in the 1960s, he sent them home. (Leo still laughs as he tells this story.)

Years ago, when their son, Lee, was small, they altered the illustrations in his Mother Goose picture books so that they included children of color. In time this led them to begin creating beautiful children's books that featured ethnically diverse characters and stories.

"We're interested in stories that have nontraditional heroes," Leo says. "People who have been overlooked; that usually means women and people of color." In books like *The People Could Fly* (Hamilton, Knopf, 1985) and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Nancy Willard (Scholastic/Blue Sky Press, 1993), the Dillons have expressed both their artistic and political concerns.

"Cultural diversity is most important to us," Diane says. "Women were not depicted as heroes, blacks were not included in children's literature when we were children. Picture books require a different way of thinking than book covers. With children's books we have 32 pages to say something graphically. But a cover requires summing everything up in one picture."

They met at Parson's School of Design, where they were artistic rivals. "Leo's work made me sick to my stomach it was so good," Diane remembers.

And Leo says, "I saw her work and it was so good that I didn't think it was fair."

Powerful chemistry was at work between them, and after three tumultuous years they decided to unite their efforts, both personally and professionally. At home, sharing a studio, they worked side by side, and then face to face, passing the work back and forth. On large paintings they would sit side by side, then switch places and go over each other's work to blend styles.

They selected the woodcut style to begin with because it was a heavily stylized "language" they could each speak without an accent. In other words, they each subjugated their own personal style to the creation of a third "Dillon" style.

From there they moved on from medium to medium, often combining them—including pastel, acrylic, prismacolor pencil, oils, and even such unlikely media as crewel needlepoint and woodcarving.

"Each time we proposed a new medium," Diane said, "the editor would ask, 'Have you ever done that before?' And we'd answer, 'Oh, sure.' Then we'd stay up all night, desperately trying to figure out what we were doing."

During this time they developed their famous "cryptesthesia" (hidden meaning) style, where one image is made from other images. This was memorably achieved in the cover for *The Essential Ellison* and *The Deathbird Stories*. But the Dillons' connection to Harlan Ellison goes back to the beginning of their careers.

They recalled a memorable weekend spent with Ellison in residence as they frantically illustrated the stories in *Dangerous Visions*, trying to meet an impossible deadline.

As Leo recalls, "Harlan was doing *Dangerous Visions* and there weren't supposed to be illustrations in that book. But Harlan, with the power of only Harlan, said 'I want illustrations.' And the publisher said, 'Okay, if you can do it over the weekend, you can have it. We're going to press on Monday, and if you don't have any drawings, that's it.' They thought they had him. So Harlan called us and said, 'There's this impossible task. I



BELOW: The 40th Annual Society of Illustrators Exhibition Poster.
OPPOSITE ABOVE: Owl Woman, *a print for Cathcart Gallery.*
OPPOSITE BELOW: This untitled painting perfectly illustrates the book Once Upon a Time.



want each story illustrated. We've only got two days to do it.' We said, 'OK, we can try.' So Harlan came over to our place. In order to speed up the process, he had to write a synopsis of each story and give us the in-between-the-lines stuff so we would be able to get the essence, because we didn't have time to read all the stories. He just kept turning these things out, and we kept drawing and drawing."

Diane picks up the story: "It was like a factory. We didn't go to sleep. We were up for most of the weekend. And we got it done. On Monday morning, Harlan marched into the publisher's office, I remember him telling us, and the editor was shocked. Then we collapsed and slept for a day."



Their recent artistic journeys have led to the triumphant *To Everything There Is a Season* in which they interpreted Ecclesiastes in a dozen styles and varying media: Japanese woodcut, Indonesian paper cutouts, Inuit print, Mayan glyphs, and even Russian iconography.

Pish, Posh, Said Hieronymous Bosch was one of the first of their efforts to feature their son Lee's 3-D work: exquisite frames for his parents' illustrations. One of their most recent books, *Wind Child*, again teams their son Lee's sculptures with their paintings in an original fairy tale.

Says Diane, "Our son has watched the madness for years, and has tried to stay out of it."

"Every now and then we lure him in," Leo adds.

Now they have studios on separate floors of their Brooklyn brownstone: Diane upstairs, Leo downstairs. When they want to discuss something, they call each other on the phone, or shout down the stairwell.

"It's our job to interpret the manuscript, and then to add to the words in picture form," Diane says. "We select each manuscript for what we think we can bring to it."

"We like to do something a little different from what the writer is doing," Leo adds. "We like to tell little stories in the background of the illustrations, maybe comment on the story a little bit."

They draw their inspiration from every thing, place, and time. Leonardo DaVinci, Gustav Klimt, Art Nouveau, and even undersea plants have furnished artistic grist for their mill. As for models, the Dillons admit that they have posed as their own subjects for almost every illustration they've done.

"We change styles because every circumstance has its own feeling," says Leo. "And a myriad styles are necessary to address those feelings. It's important to us not to repeat ourselves."

How do they work so well together?

"By the time we're ready to begin the finished work, we have a finished detailed pencil sketch so we know what's in each other's mind," Diane says. "We've already discussed and argued it out by the time the finished pencil sketch is ready."

"And we mean finished," Leo says. "Once we're done with that pencil sketch, there's no guessing. What you see is what you'll get."

As artist/writer Vincent DiFate has commented in his encyclopedic *Infinite Worlds* "[The Dillons'] exquisite decorative illustrations have graced virtually every manner and form of subject, and it is the good fortune of SF and fantasy fans that this divinely gifted couple has given the genre more than a passing nod."

Amen. ❧



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Letters

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

Thank you so very much for choosing my entry. I cannot describe how excited I was to see it. Another inmate has a subscription to your magazine, and when he finishes reading it, he passes it on. It eventually makes its way to me. Two of my friends read it and neither said anything to me. They didn't associate their friend Scott with the one that had won the contest. Considering the references I made, I am just a bit skeptical ... Hmmm ... Back to my point though. When I submitted the entry I thought it was terrible. I came up with a thousand ways to make it better after it was already in the mail. You liked it well enough to select it though, so I'll give myself a break and lessen my self-criticism. Thank you for looking past my incarceration. I was worried my entry would be discarded outright because of it.

Eternally grateful,
Scott Fleming

Scott—it was a pleasure to read your piece and we have had a lot of positive feedback from it.

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

I was one of the 15 entries for your editorial contest. I've been writing Fantasy for several years and my entry to you was the first I'd ever submitted. Imagine my disappointment after all that work and effort, after spending almost $12 to overnight my entries a week early to ensure their prompt arrival, only to find out that the post office had attempted to deliver the envelope and it hadn't been picked up until the day *after* the deadline! My apologies, but I had no idea that sending it Express Mail would complicate things. In fact, my intentions were exactly the opposite! I must protest, then, being named a procrastinator. Rather, I admit to being a very green, very hopeful writer who has learned that regular mail is best. A valuable lesson indeed. Thank you for the opportunity to submit our ideas, and my congrats to Scott Fleming for taking first place. In conclusion—I am sorry you were disappointed by your readership's response, but I must admit the evil beastie in me hopes that it has made my chances better!

Christine Russell

Thanks for bringing this up Christine. I can see that writers might feel that sending their work express, certified, and so forth might ensure speedier pick-up, a safer arrival, or a quicker path into the hands of a reader in our office. Not the case, as you discovered the hard way. First of all, much of the mail is picked up after hours, with a special P.O. box key and no postal staff available; second, one of the reasons we use a P.O. box is because this eliminates the need to wait in line for our mail ... having to wait in line for 20 or so minutes for one piece of mail (that can frequently turn out to be junk mail or an unusable manuscript) is maddening and a waste of time better spent in other Realms*-related pursuits (we can read a heck of a lot of stories in 20 minutes!). Therefore, any mail that needs to be "signed" for is not always picked up on the day it arrives at the P.O. It is picked up at our convenience. So, in your case, Christine, we shall retract the procrastinator label—and hope your experience encourages other writers to send items that do not require our signatures.*

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

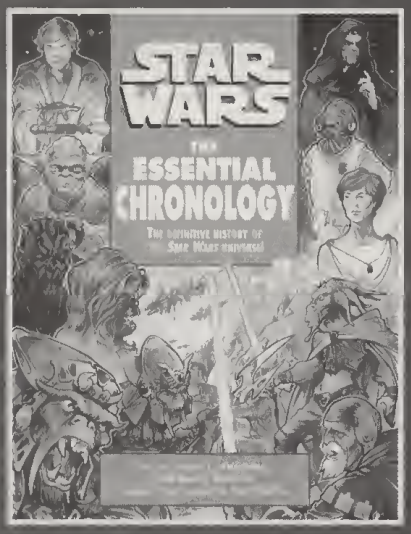
I hate to admit it now, but the first time I read your magazine (October 1998), I agreed with the letters complaining about the lack of "traditional" Fantasy content. I bought it as a fledgling Fantasy writer, hoping to find an outlet for my work, only to decide that wasn't likely. "Good magazine," I thought, "but not for me." However, over time your magazine grew on me! Mainly because it is so intelligent. From the regular columns you publish to the fiction—I am constantly impressed by the quality of *Realms*. In my first six issues I found myself loving stories I might never have read otherwise, such as "Inner, Inner City," "Jordan's Waterhammer," "Baptism on Bittersweet Creek," and 'Stalin's Candy," to name a few. Images from these stories kept coming back to me at reflective moments, forcing me to wonder why I liked them as much as the ones I expected to like ("Alice," Bitter Chivalry," "Arthur's Wishes," "The Grammarian's Five Daughters," and so on). In order to figure out why, I had to set aside my preconceptions about what Fantasy should be. So, my closed mind creaked open, with *Realms* serving as the oil for my rusty hinges. I re-examined my ideas about what makes Fantasy good, what lures me to read it and inspires me to write it. I have realized it is the imaginative possibilities. Fantasy can examine human abilities that modern psychology cannot explain; can wrestle with beliefs that current philosophy wants to reject; and best of all—can explore facets of reality that science won't even admit to. I have come to realize that to insist on a medieval setting not only insults the genre, but severely restricts the possibilities I so love about it. I wish to encourage you to be true to your own tastes, because you opened my mind—maybe you will open a few more!

Karin Porte Caledonia,
Ontario, Canada

Your letters are welcome. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, Realms of Fantasy, *P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet, E-mail to: shawnam896@aol.com*

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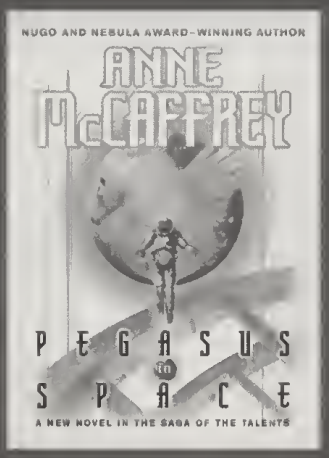




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BY ERIC T. BAKER

We're not in Kansas anymore: Wizards and clans and pirates, oh my!

SET IN GLORANTHA, *KING OF DRAGON PASS; ADVENTURE AND HEROISM ON A MAGICAL FRONTIER* is a turn-based strategy game from A Sharp for Windows or Macintosh ($37.50.) The player controls a bronze-age clan that escaped from servitude to freedom in a land called Dragon Pass. The goal is to run the clan well, get on the good side of the gods, and unite the clan with others until a kingdom is created that controls all of Dragon Pass. Glorantha is not the typical setting for a computer game. Glorantha was created in the 'seventies by Greg Stafford. He has used it as the background for a variety of games, most famously the pen-and-dice RPG, *Runequest*. Like Tolkien, Stafford made up his one Fantasy world and has spent more than 20 years expanding it. PR people like to refer to their game's backgrounds as being "grand" and "sweeping," when in reality they were thrown together a few months ago and will be forgotten just as quickly. If you want to see a truly grand and sweeping game, then check out *KoDP*.





ABOVE: Elements of Alexander Dumas' classic books are evident in Montaigne, *the latest in the* Nations Books *series. INSET: In* Mage the Ascension, *reality is what you make of it.*

KoDP is not the typical computer game. There are no intro movies, no animated logos, no three-minute QuickTime shorts, just a splash screen and a list of play options. Nor do 3-D graphics start when the gameplay does. The only graphics in the game are 2-D, and they are not animated. What *KoDP* most resembles is a text-based adventure game, but it is more than that because it is also a strategy game. It includes lots of still, 2-D graphics, and its interface requires no text parsing. In other words, it is a game that is banking on the quality of its background and story to sell it, rather than its eye-popping special effects.

Turns in *KoDP* are divided into seasons and each season the player takes two actions. All kinds of actions are possible: sending trade missions or embassies to other clans, holding feasts to improve the morale of the people, sacrificing to the gods, cattle rustling from other clans, exploring, and more. At the end of each season an event occurs, such as an attack by another clan, and the player picks a response. At all times, both in picking actions and responding to events, the player must keep in mind the clan's assets. The lives of the clan are in the player's hands. Luckily, the player is advised by a "clan ring," a group of characters each with his or her own personality and agenda, who offer opinions and advice on each option. As in the real world, much of the advice is predictable (the leader of the farmers wants more magic for the spells to grow better crops, etc.), but the advice does give the player a guide as to how much and when things need allocating and doing.

Keeping the clan alive and healthy is the strategy part of the game, but players can't win if they don't also complete the "Hero's Quests" that are built into the game. These quests allow the player to unite his clan with other, friendly clans, then later putting all those clans together to form a tribe, then later still, pulling all the tribes together to form a kingdom. Completing that last one wins the game, but you have to perform the right quests to get to that point. It takes about nine successful quests to win the game, but each one takes time and resources away from the clan. To complete a quest, it is necessary to learn the details of the myth associated with it. Resources are sacrificed to the god associated with the quest, the myth is learned, and then on the quest the player tries to reproduce the actions of the myth's hero, so it is necessary to pay attention to what the gods reveal.

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The whole game is well written, which is important since there is no 3-D animation to distract the player from the game. There is no endless moving of an avatar over ground it has already traveled just for the sake of finding the right character to question. The player doesn't have to move his character to the "town hall" to have a meeting with his advisers. He just clicks on the proper screen and there they are. The game still takes a long time to play, but that is because there are a lot of things to do, not because there is a lot of busy work to be done. *King of Dragon Pass* is not a retro game. It is a fully modern Fantasy adventure that simply leaves out all the distracting graphics.

Mage the Ascension, 2nd Edition, White Wolf Publishing, $30, 310 p., including Table of Contents and Index.

This has possibilities.

For my personal taste, the biggest flaw in the various White Wolf games is that they force players to run characters that aren't human. *Vampire*, *Werewolf*, *Wraith*, even *Hunter*, ask you to take on the character of a creature out of Horror. There are no rules for playing just a plain human being. Technically there aren't even rules for making ordinary humans to be Game-Master controlled non-player characters. In evolutionary terms, all the niches are filled by monsters.

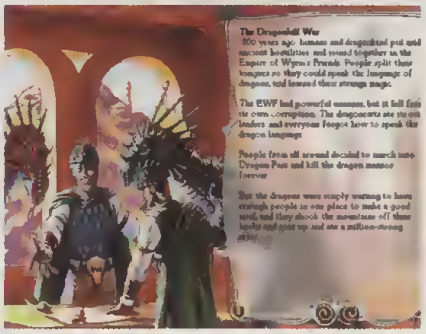
Mage is not a departure per se from the White Wolf model. There are still no rules for normal humans in the book, but at least the game is not built around human-devouring creatures of the night. *Mage* is about wizards, and they are a pretty spiffy lot.

The background to *Mage* is that reality is what people make of it. Most of us want it to be what it is today, so that is what it is. But certain people get bit by an Ascension, and those people can then change the world to be what they want it to be, by force of their will alone. Because this is a White Wolf product, it turns out that after their Ascension, mages fall into one of nine traditions, each one linked to a different mystic sphere, and then into one of the various sects within that tradition. And it also turns out that all of us who are not Ascended—Sleepers in *Mage* speak—see the world the way we do because a group of mages, who believed in science and called themselves the Technomacy, won a war against all the other mages. Now the Technomacy's world view dominates, and they are still out there, ready to defend it.

How does this all work? Well, the authors say right up front that *Mage* employs a freeform magic system: there is no long spell book to read, and no particular spells to be written down on the character sheet. Players just need to keep track of how good they are at each of the nine spheres and in theory they can do anything they can imagine.

As you would expect, the reality is a little different. While there is no spell list in *Mage*, there are 40-some odd pages describing each of the spheres and listing various effects that can be produced by invoking them, rating each of those effects at a certain level. Thus while it is theoretically possible for a brand-new mage to transform someone into a frog, such a transformation is a Life Sphere effect of the fifth level. Casting a spell of that level requires that the mage rolls 9s or 10s on his 10-sided dice to score a "success," and that he roll at least five successes, although 10 would be better. If the mage is willing to put in the time, he can eventually get those successes, but if on any pass of the dice he scores no successes, then reality will smack him down. On that big a spell, the backlash may just fry the young mage dead.

So in practice, mages tend to cast simple spells that don't draw attention to themselves. It is easier and safer to make a pursuer trip over his shoe laces than it is to blast him with a fire ball. Also in practice, players don't have to write down a list of spells, but they would be well advised to learn everything about the spheres they are good at up to the levels they can cast them. The Game Master, of course, better know those whole 40 pages pretty well, or there will be constant stops while he looks up things.



The quests and strategy involved in Kings of Dragon Pass *more than makes up for its lack of 3-D graphics.*

I love playing wizards, and you can do some boffo cool things with *Mage*'s sorcerers. The rules make it possible not to just create "classic" magic users, but Chinese-style sorcerers, martial artists with those crazy wuxia powers, druids, and since technology itself turns out to be a form of magic, players can create cyborgs, hackers, and even hot-shot pilots. *Mage* is the most flexible and open-ended of all the White Wolf games. It is not quite a generic set of rules, but it can take your campaign wherever the players want to go.

The Montaigne Nations Book, which is the third in the *Nations Books* series for the *7th Sea* role-playing game, from AEG ($19.95, 128 pp., including maps and record sheets, but no Index) gets to the heart of the swashbuckling genre: musketeers. The first *Nations Book* covered pirates, who are the other half of the genre, but really, how much adventure can you really have on a rotting wooden sailing ship? But give the characters the largest, richest city in the world, the most conniving nobles, the most desperate peasants, dark alleys, military campaigns, and court intrigue.

Make all that a campaign's setting, and the adventures can go on for years.

In the faux Europe of Théah, it is 1668 and Montaigne stands in for France and Charouse stands in for Paris. The Sun King is in his place, defended by his musketeers, while the country wars with Castille, the Théah stand in for Spain. *Montaigne* details all the elements that Alexander Dumas presented in his classic books and adds magic and Théah's own little twists to them.

The first chapter of *Montaigne* deals with the country itself. It runs down the history and important locations for all of Montaigne's 15 provinces. The second chapter is 20 pages of the most important Non-Player Characters in the realm, from the Emperor himself to his generals, prelates, and landowners. Chapter Three has all the tasty, crunchy bits that drive supplements: a character-design method that uses tarot cards, new magic rules and abilities, new backgrounds, new sword schools(!), new advantages and equipment, rules for courtly intrigue, fighting in the dark, and mass battles, plus a cool table for rolling up "puzzle swords." Chapter Four contains essays for players on how to play *Montaigne* characters and essays for the Game Masters on how to keep those characters busy. In addition, the GM section contains the stats and secrets for the characters who were described in Chapter Two, as well as new spirits and ghosts. The last part of the book contains a (needed) sheet for keeping track of the Courtly Intrigue the characters get involved in, a map of Charouse, deck plans for three ships, and four brand-new character templates.

The weapons list for *7th Sea* is very short. What is supposed to distinguish the combatants is their style of swordplay, not the swords they use. Puzzle swords are not really different types of swords as much as they are extras added to existing swords. Springloaded spikes, for example, or a needle-injected healing potion. The hilt might be built with blade-catching tines or a hand-catching trap. A couple of really good rolls can produce a sword with magical abilities like "return to hand" or "can only be wielded by owner."

It shouldn't be possible to play a *Montaigne*-based campaign without getting caught up in courtly intrigue, but doing it well in a big court like the Sun King's takes record keeping. The rules provided in the supplement show you how to put numbers to the leanings of a lot of the necessarily nebulous NPCs with whom the characters are making connections. These numbers are influenced by the list of actions that players can direct their characters to perform while in court. This list is not intended to be the only possibilities, but it provides a framework for all that the characters might get up to.

Together with the basic rule books, *Montaigne* provides what players and Game Masters need to conduct their own campaigns in a world that Dumas would have recognized. ❧

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FAT GRITS

Continued from page 59

morsel. You'll make a small but piquant hors d'oeuvre."

"Small? Did you say *small*?! Ha!"

And Princess Grits leaped on the dragon's back and sank her teeth into its neck. Snap, snap, snap. She had good strong teeth, and she was very cross and very hungry. She ate the dragon all up. Just like that: All gone except for the wings, which were a bit leathery, and the clutch of six large eggs.

PRINCESS GRITS, FAT ONCE MORE, SAT ON the pile of gee-gaws and sucked the marrow from a thigh bone, thinking.

Now, as well as being fat and stubborn and beautiful, Princess Fat Grits was smart. It did not take her long to figure things out. She gathered up the six eggs, tied the dragon's wings to her shoulders, and went to the top of the mountain. When the wind was just right, she jumped off.

For three days and three nights she glided over the sheep tracks and fertile fields, the slow rivers and gentle valleys of what would one day be her realm. Whenever she got hungry, she cracked open one of the dragon's eggs and sucked. They were big eggs, and tasted like hot gold. As she soared through the air she felt very strong and very, well, fiery.

It was midmorning of the fourth day when Princess Fat Grits, huge wings outspread, landed with a thump on the springy turf of the palace gardens. She roared with satisfaction. The gardener went red, then white, then fainted. Princess Grits stepped over him carefully. She had to pull her wings in a bit to squeeze through the palace door.

All fled before her as she strode through the corridors to the audience chamber where the king, more portly than ever, was listening to the case of a turnip farmer whose dogs, apparently, were making life miserable for his next-door neighbor, who raised hamsters.

Princess Grits paused in the doorway. The huge dragon wings blotted out the sunlight. The king looked up. His face seemed a funny color. He squinted in the sudden gloom. "Daughter?"

She nodded. The wings moved a little, wafting over the hall dragonish smells of sulphur and old gold. The king's face darkened. Princess Grits knew what that meant; she strode forward, concerned. Too late. The king clutched at his chest, gasped, and fell over, stone dead.

Princess Fat Grits sighed. "I told him to watch his blood pressure," she said to no one in particular. She wondered, though only briefly, why she didn't feel more sad.

Now, as well as being fat and beautiful and stubborn and smart, Princess Fat Grits

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was also very practical. So as soon as all the initial commotion died down, she looked around the audience chamber and said, "Well, I suppose I'm in charge now," and sat on the throne.

She crooked a finger toward the turnip farmer and the hamster breeder. They crept forward. "Tell me," she said into the scared silence, "do hamsters taste good?"

THE NEXT DAY, FAT GRITS WAS CROWNED queen of the realm, and a proclamation was read in which Queen Fat Grits declared suitors were no longer welcome at the palace. After all, the criers shouted, she had sworn she would only marry someone who had bested the dragon ... and there was no longer a dragon around to best.

There were a few murmurs from the peasantry about heirs, but as their crops no longer got burned and as the air no longer smelled nasty, on the whole they agreed things had worked out rather well.

The years passed, and Queen Fat Grits ruled wisely and well. The years became decades, and though the Queen got fatter, she showed no signs of dying any time soon.

There were rumors, of course, about the queen's obsession with bright sparkly things, and a few close advisers had been heard to whisper how long and horny Her Majesty's nails had become, but no one paid very much attention. The queen was, after all, the queen, and it was nobody's business to pry too closely. Likewise, it was nobody's business that, if the queen was irritated or cross after a particularly large meal, her burps tended to burst into flame. One just had to be very careful not to make her cross, which became more difficult as time passed. One way to stay in favor was to use in her presence the many new words she had caused the royal lexicographers to set down.

The queendom of Fat Grits prospered.

So, as you can see, she got what she wanted, in a way, but it was rather extreme. So, I'll ask you again: What are you going to do about the bungee jumping?

Naturally, there are options. There are always options. You could climb out of the window, for example. Too dangerous? And bungee jumping isn't? There's risk in everything, my dear, what matters is that you choose the time and degree of risk for yourself. Don't let others dictate for you. Oh, no, no. I'm not telling you what to do. Choosing for yourself does not necessarily mean going against your parents' wishes, it simply means deciding when to go along with them and when not.

Confusing you? On the contrary. I am merely trying to clarify the situation. It's really quite simple. Was Fat Grits any happier as a queen, with no family and her subjects more afraid than loving, than she was as a princess? Only she knows the truth. Just as only you can make this decision. I'll look forward to learning your choice when we meet next. ❧

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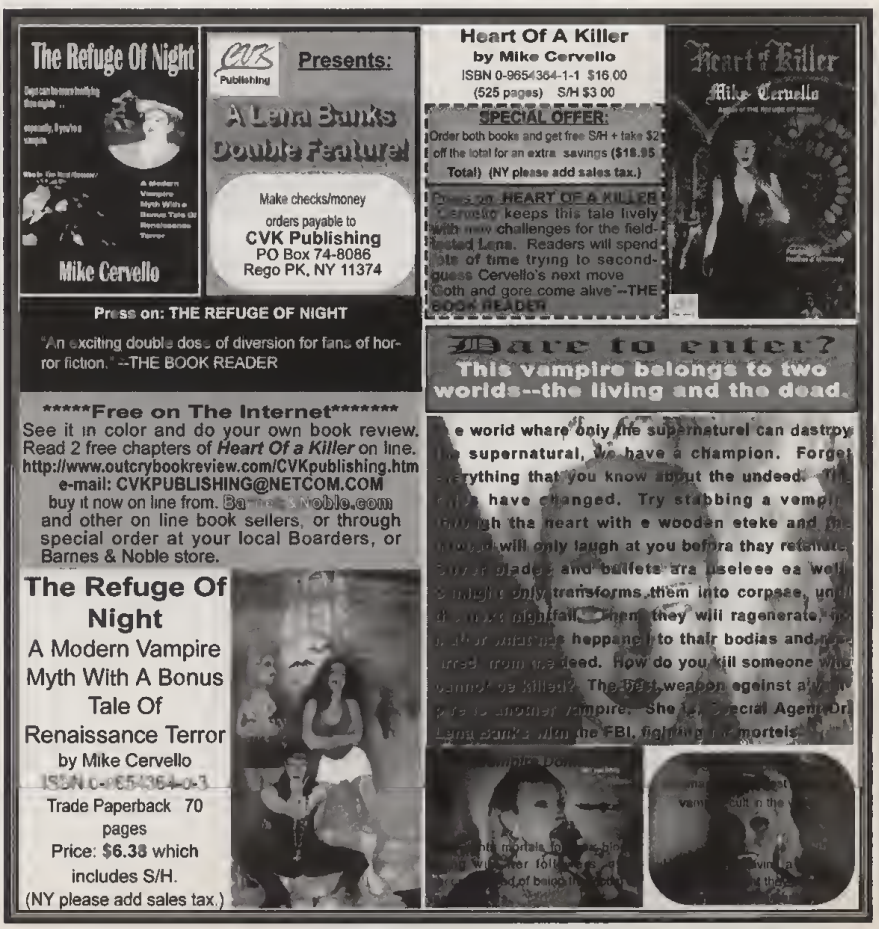




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SEVENTH SLEEPER

Continued from page 41

THEY BURIED *DER ALT GRAF* IN THE CRYPT BELOW THE CHAPEL.

His relatives viewed me with suspicion, only partially allayed when they discovered there was no mention of me in the *Graf*'s will. I suppose they thought I was his catamite.

I told them about the bodies in the abandoned salt mine. They retrieved six skeletons still held together by desiccated skin, wrapped in rotted woolen cloaks from which the colors had long faded, and laid them to rest alongside the *Graf*.

I was once again homeless and out of work. But then the Baron and Baroness offered me a position as assistant manager in one of their hotels. I was responsible for the first of their worldwide chain to be built in Canada. I eventually became a Canadian citizen.

My children have distanced themselves from me, unwilling to risk the taint of my past, but my oldest grandson has grown closer in later years.

Only yesterday he came to me to tell me, with some hesitation, of a recurring dream to which more is added each time he dreams it.

In the first dream, he says, he is driving down a road in Bavaria. He has never visited Bavaria, but he describes exactly the road down which I drove that spring, with the *Graf* and Hannah as passengers.

In the second dream spring turns suddenly to autumn, a strangely dry October. Dust rises from the ditch beside the road and blows through the open car window. It smells of ashes and death. It blinds him, he loses control of the wheel, and the car goes off the road. Everything goes black then.

In the third dream he still cannot see, but he can taste salt mixed with ashes. He realizes that he is no longer in the car, but in an abandoned mine, beating his fists against a wall that is a dead end …

For now, he dreams no further.

But although I cannot tell where it will end for him, I know what happens next.

As I beat frantically against the wall, the steel and concrete dissolve beneath my hands. I stumble forward into a salt chamber, the walls carved, ribbed and vaulted like a cathedral. There is a round oaken table in the center, lit from below with a phosphorescent and sickly glow.

Trembling, I approach the seven sleepers around the table. I walk around them, looking at their bird-of-prey faces, naming each in turn.

Streicher. Borman. Göring. Goebbels. Himmler.

Then the face of a fox. And I think, *Rommel shouldn't be here*. But they need a warrior, and so, for his sins, here he sleeps.

I approach the seventh sleeper, raise the pistol I find in my hand, and take careful aim at the back of his head.

For my sins, I always awaken before pulling the trigger. ❧

GHOST AFFAIR

Continued from page 64

Her search took her the better part of a year, but she had time.

The rest of my life if needed, she thought. Her parents' house had brought in a great deal of money. It was not money that worried her. It was the rest of Simon's life she was afraid of.

Once she'd been through every cemetery in the city she was at a loss, until she remembered that Simon had once spoken of being an East Neuk lad. On a whim she went by bus out to Crail, the little fishing village Simon had mentioned.

It was a pearl of a village with a mercat cross topped by a unicorn in the center of the upper town. The tollbooth was a tiered tower with a graceful belfry. When she went along the shop row, passing a bakery and a butcher's, she was stopped by a glass-fronted jewelry store. It sold both new pieces—rather simple and not terribly interesting—and antique ware.

Glancing up at the sign over the lintel, she was stunned.

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Trembling, she went in.

14

YOU'VE GUESSED it now.

How the story ends.

But you are wrong again.

Andrea does not find Simon—for he is long gone and no amount of standing about in electrical storms can take her back again in time.

Who she finds is the great great grandson of Simon Morrison who is also named Simon.

And that Simon, on hearing the name Andrea Crow, immediately gives her a job as a jewelry maker in the shop because it has been a family legend—accompanied by a notarized document—that some time in the new century such a young woman would come. Black curls, violet eyes, and a master jeweler's skill.

In his early thirties, this Simon looks nothing like old Simon. He has a roundness to his face and a sunny disposition. He does not so much make jewelry as sell what others make.

After half a year, he proposes and Andrea accepts and they marry, though Andrea explains that some part of her will always belong to old Simon.

This young Simon understands. It is, after all, part of the family tradition. Scots are big on lost causes.

Andrea's designs become as popular in Scotland and then England and then the Continent. Neiman Marcus rediscovers her work. She and Simon have three children.

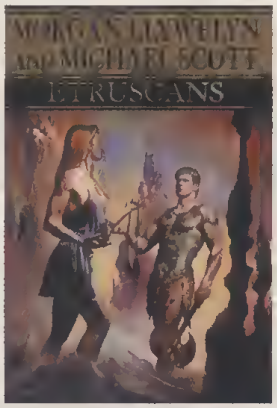
And in time they fall in love.

In time. ❧

BOOKS

Continued from page 25

After only six years, Horatrim is a full-grown man, blessed with gifts of knowledge and abilities from his spiritual ancestors.



Traveling to Rome to seek some modicum of vengeance for the death of those he held dear, Horatrim is separated from his mother, Vesi. At times he feels as lost as a six-year-old child might in a crowded department store, while at other times he uses his forefathers' implanted knowledge to take charge of situations as a man of action does in times of great need. All the while his father, the demon Bur-Sin, searches for his son in order to kill him. For, as long as Horatrim is alive, the demon is vulnerable to magical destruction.

Aided in his search by an Aegyptian priest of Anubis and a benevolent spirit who was once the Lord of the Rasne people, Horatrim must battle monsters, fight spirit wraiths on many planes of existence, and wrestle with foes who wear friendly faces. In the realm of *Etruscans*, the Earthworld is just one of three places that spirits reside.

As noted in the epigraph at the beginning of the book, the flesh is tied to Earthworld, the spirit is tied to the Otherworld, and Death is tied to the Netherworld. This can be a nasty formula if you have many enemies, since just because their flesh is dead, it does not mean they are by any means gone.

Etruscans is an epic in every sense of the word. In it you will find valiant battles where courage is the only weapon, mystical ghosts that whisper advice in the ears of those they shadow, and emperors and senators and businessmen alike brimming with political maneuvering and designs.

Llywelyn and Scott weave a wonderful Fantasy tale that will make you fall in love with the genre all over again. But, reader beware! You may not be able to put this one down.

Brian Murphy

BOOKS TO WATCH FOR

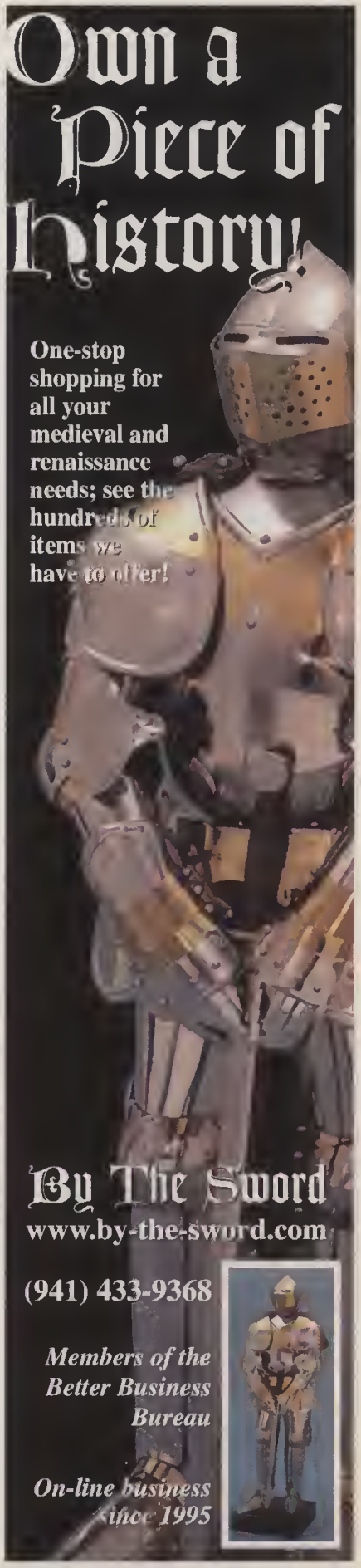
A Wizard and a Warlord, by Christopher Stasheff, Tor hardcover, $22.00. Gar Pike returns in his seventh Tor adventure. The warlock's gallant son and a young psychic, Alea, embark upon a mission to rescue a planet from its corrupt government—only to discover the planet has no ruling force at all. This novel is light-hearted and witty, full of medievalism and political intrigue. Will a planet without any government prosper? Will Gar discover that having Alea around beats being alone? Should Gar keep his nose out of other people's business? Read on, and you will know the answers.... The renegade psychic wizard and his stubborn quest to bring freedom to medieval space colonies is sure to please both readers of Fantasy and Science Fiction.



Farmer Giles of Ham, 50th Anniversary Edition, by J.R.R. Tolkien, edited by Christina Scull and Wayne G. Hammond, Houghton Mifflin Co., $17.00. Tolkien's marvelous tale of a reluctant hero who must save his village from a dragon returns to delight readers both new and familiar. This satire is pleasing to young and old. Also included are illustrations by Pauline Baynes, illustrator of C.S.Lewis's *Narnia* books. Assisted by his dog, his horse, and a magic sword—this tale of Farmer Giles, of dragons and giants, will charm the reader in much the same way the Harry Potter books have captivated readers of today.



Lord of Emperors, Book Two of the Sarantine Mosaic, by Guy Gavriel Kay, Harper-Prism hardcover, $24.00. Author Kay's career began when he completed J.R.R. Tolkien's posthumous masterpiece, *The Silmarillion*. An engaging storyteller, Kay does not disappoint in this, the concluding novel that began with *Sailing to Sarantium*. War and intrigue, journeys of self-discovery, and a spectacular cast of characters make up this dramatic new triumph of a tale. Meet Crispin, the mosaicist, and Rustem of Kerakek, the voyager and savior of Bassania's King of Kings. Both have been drawn to the city of Sarantium, to its turmoils of court and city—and both are aware that the ever-present "half-world" looms close at hand....



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Contributors

NICOLA GRIFFITH is the multiple award winning author of *Ammonite*, *Slow River*, and *The Blue Place*. She is the editor, with Stephen Pagel, of the *Bending the Landscape* anthology series. She lives in Seattle with her partner, writer Kelley Eskridge.

KATE RIEDEL lives in Toronto with a poet and two cats. Her short fiction has appeared in *On Spec*, *Not One of Us*, and *Highlights for Children*. Current projects include a screenplay about Wyatt Earp's sister-in-law and a novelette about a former Hitler Jungend who makes a proposal to an old aristocrat and gets more than he bargained for.

RICHARD PARKS is a Mississippi storyteller. Atypical of the breed, he cannot tell a lie with a straight face, and so he has to write them all down. Some of his better fibs have appeared in *Asimov's*, *Science Fiction Age*, *Realms*, and *Dragon Magazine*. He lives with a wife and three cats who don't believe a word he says, except on his birthday and certain designated major holidays. (From the introduction to "Notes From the Bridge," *Blood Muse*, Donald I. Fine, Inc., edited by Esther Friesner.)

KAREN HABER is the author of eight novels. Her short fiction has appeared in *Asimov's*, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and various anthologies. In her secret identity as an art journalist, she reviews art books for Locus and has profiled many of the top artists in the SF and Fantasy fields.

CORY DOCTOROW (www.craphound.com) lives and works in Toronto, Canada, where he is the CIO of a startup called Steelbridge. His work has appeared in *Asimov's*, *Amazing*, *Science Fiction Age*, both Dazois' and Hartwell's *Year's Best* anthologies, and elsewhere. He is the co-author (with Karl Schroeder) of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Science Fiction*, which will be an August Macmillian title.

DAVID SANDNER teaches at the University of Oregon. His book, *The Fantastic Sublime: Romanticism and Transcendence in Nineteenth-Century Children's Fantasy Literature*, came out from Greenwood Press in 1996. He has published essays on the fantastic in *Extrapolation*, *English Language Notes*, *The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, and *Mythlore*. His short fiction has appeared in *Asimov's*, *Weird Tales*, *Pulphouse*, *Pulp Eternity*, and in the anthology, *Dragons*. "Enchanted Ground" is his third story for *Realms*.

M. SHAYNE BELL has sold thirty-three stories to magazines and anthologies, including: *Amazing Stories*, *Asimov's*, and *Tomorrow*. His stories and poems have been translated into six languages. A second novel, *Inuit*, won first place in the 1997 Utah Original Writing Contest. "The Road to Canderei" was translated into German and printed as the title story of the anthology *Die Strasse Nach Canderei*, edited by Wolfgang Jeschke.

STEVE ADLER grew up in Peekskill, NY. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design, studied independently in Rome, and has been a professional illustrator since 1984. Recent projects include Fantasy covers for AvoNova and Viking Books, a Celestial Seasonings tea box, and a new illustrated logo for the Barbados Tourism Authority. Steve has been exhibiting his paintings in galleries in northern Virginia near his home in Sperryville.

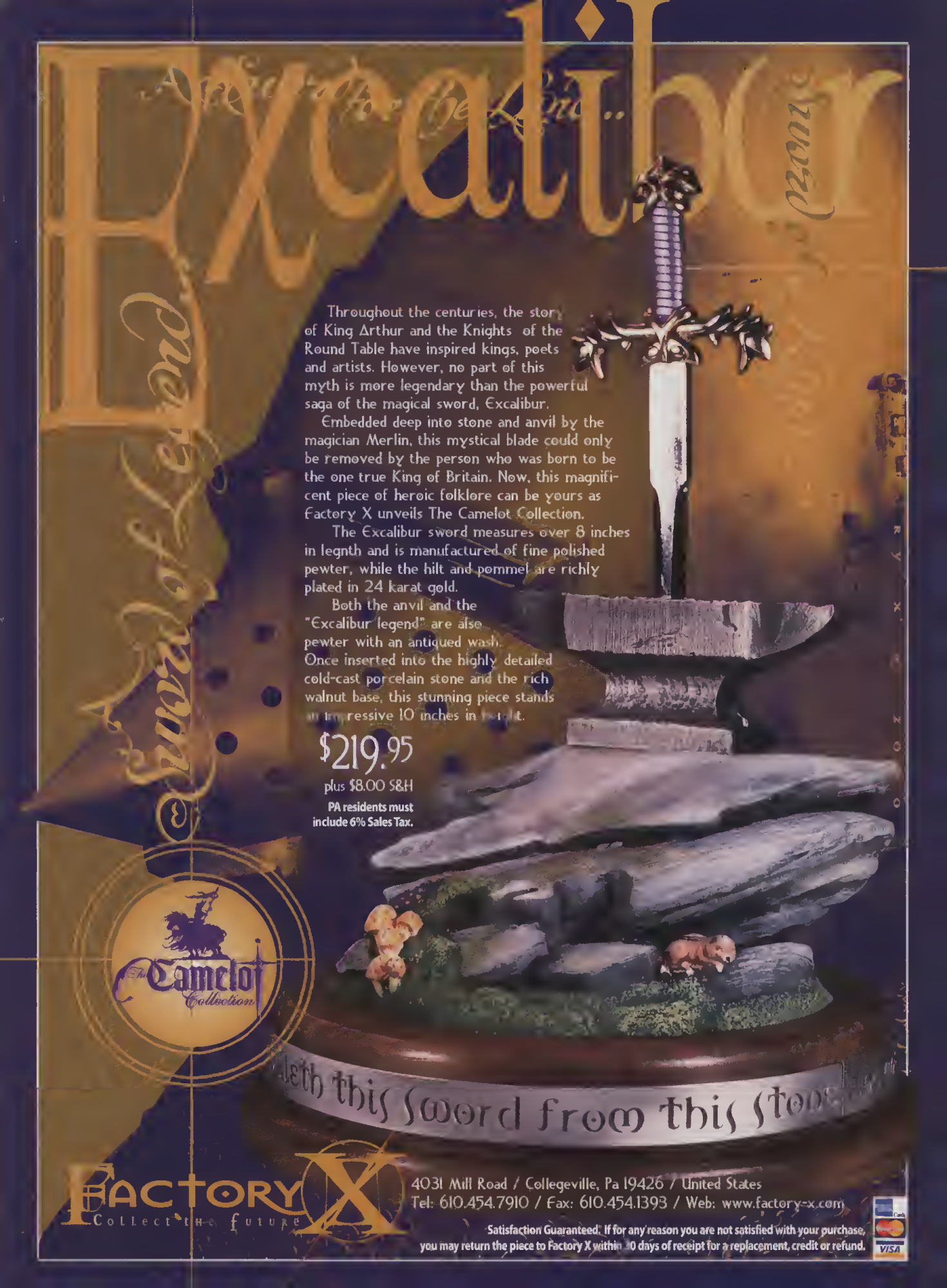
JK POTTER combines art and photography to create stunning images with an intensely dark psychological vision. Potter's art explores the relationship of the body to our deepest obsessions and fears. JK's images are created using old fashioned black and white darkroom techniques and are retouched and hand colored. In addition to creating illustrations for such authors as Ray Bradbury, Poppy Z. Brite, Stephen King, and Clive Barker, his designs have also appeared in films.

DON MAITZ is internationally acclaimed for his book cover paintings. He has twice won the Hugo award for Best Artist; a special Hugo for Best Original Artwork; the Howard Award for Best Fantasy Artist; ten Chelsey Awards; and the Silver Medal of Excellence and Certificates of Merit from the Society of Illustrators. Don created the Captain Morgan image for Seagram and Sons spiced rum. His Fantasy images have been produced as limited edition prints. He has authored two art book collections, *First Maitz*, and *Dreamquests*. His Web site location is www.paravia.com/DonMaitz.

JANE YOLEN is a master storyteller and the award-winning author of the Young Merlin Trilogy and *The Devil's Arithmetic*. "Ghost of an Affair" will be included in Jane's new collection of adult Fantasy stories, *Sister Emily's Lightship*, coming from Tor Books this spring.

WEB BRYANT's artistic skills cross many disciplines in commercial art. He was part of the design team that created USA Today. Other achievements: art directing in the first national children's newspaper, *Pennywhistle Press*, and creating national award-winning maps and graphics. His first love is painting, especially when he can work with the wonders of natural and directional light.

BRIAN MURPHY was born in southern California, but has lived in northern Virginia most of his life. He has attended the University of Virginia, studied at University College Galway in Ireland, worked on a cowboy ranch in Wyoming, and is currently a technical writer. In between working and writing and waiting for that first sell, Brian is continuously looking for that elusive "free time." ❧


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